



In Memoriam
Susan Neff McMaster

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

PROPHET—PREACHER

By
EDWARD S. NINDE



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**IN REVERENT MEMORY OF
MY PARENTS**

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PREFACE

VERY little has been written on Whitefield in recent years. The standard Lives are out of print, and almost nothing can be obtained in the book-market. This, if nothing else, would seem to justify a new study of the great preacher's career.

The present volume is in no sense a full biography. Numerous details have been omitted, many of them bearing on controversial and other subjects which have little or no interest for present-day readers. Nor has the chronological method been strictly followed.

The aim has been to bring together, in specific groupings, those outstanding and colorful facts which show the real Whitefield: the Prophet-Preacher who left his impress on two continents; and the Man of like passions with ourselves.

The sources of information are ample. Besides all that his contemporaries and later writers have told us, we have his own "Short Account" and "Further Account" of his early life, his Journals and Sermons, and 1,465 Letters from his pen; together with the many pamphlets he published between 1738 and the time of his death, which throw light on his ministry. Happily, our American historical collections are rich in original material.

EDWARD S. NINDE.

West Chester, Pennsylvania.

CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF WHITEFIELD'S LIFE

- December 16, 1714: Born at Gloucester, England.
1726-1729: Student at Saint Mary de Crypt School.
1730-1731: Worked at the Bell Inn.
1731-1732: Again at Saint Mary de Crypt School.
1732: Entered Pembroke College, Oxford.
May, 1735: Converted.
May, 1735-March, 1736: Out of college.
June 20, 1736: Ordained deacon.
June 27, 1736: Preached first sermon.
July, 1736: Graduated from Oxford.
August and September, 1736: Preached in London.
1737: Itinerant preaching in England.
February 2, 1738: Sailed first time for America.
September 9, 1738: Left America for England.
January 14, 1739: Ordained to the priesthood.
August, 1739-January, 1741: Second visit to America.
November, 1739: First visit to Philadelphia and New York.
January, 1740: Opened orphan home in Georgia.
September and October, 1740: First visit to New England.
1741-1744: In Great Britain.
August-November, 1741: First visit to Scotland.
November 14, 1741: Married to Mrs. Elizabeth James.
August, 1744-June, 1748: Third visit to America.
July, 1748-August, 1751: Three years in Great Britain and Ireland.
September, 1751-May, 1752: Fourth visit to America.
May, 1752-March, 1754: Itinerating in Great Britain.
March, 1754-May, 1755: Fifth visit to America.
1755-1763: Eight years in the United Kingdom.
June, 1763-July, 1765: Sixth visit to America.
July, 1765-September, 1769: Last years in Great Britain.
September, 1769-September, 1770: Seventh visit to America.
September 30, 1770: Died at Newburyport, Massachusetts.

CHAPTER I
BORN AND BORN AGAIN

Lord Jesus, make us great proficient in the school of thy cross.¹

I have put my soul, as a blank, into the hands of Jesus Christ my Redeemer, and desired him to write upon it what he pleases. I know it will be his own image.

¹The quotations at the opening of each chapter are chiefly from Whitefield's letters.

CHAPTER I

BORN AND BORN AGAIN

NORTHWEST from London, a hundred miles as the crow flies, is the quaint old town of Gloucester. The lofty tower of the ancient cathedral looks down on many an historic spot. Over toward the Welsh hills lies the hamlet where William Tyndale was born. In Saint Mary's Square, under the very shadow of the cathedral, the stout-hearted Bishop Hooper died at the stake, rather than surrender his Protestant convictions to "Bloody Mary." Yonder, in Southgate Street, in that curious timber-framed house, Robert Raikes, of Sunday school fame, used to live, while farther on is the place where he organized the first group of children. But most interesting of all, for our present purpose, is the old Bell Inn, where, nine days before Christmas, in the year 1714, a boy was born whom his parents named "George," and who became one of the mightiest preachers of the gospel since Apollos.

We cannot help contrasting the boyhood advantages of George Whitefield with those of John and Charles Wesley. The Wesleys, born and reared in the tonic atmosphere of the Epworth parsonage; a devout father; their mother, one of the rarest women of that or of any age; from infancy, ideally

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trained for life's duties. Whitefield, brought up in a public house, with its daily round of drunken brawls; when two years old losing his father; his mother, a sincere woman, of good intentions but of ordinary parts; up to his thirteenth year receiving a very meager education, and having no adequate religious oversight. The marvel is that the boy did not go through life a common bartender, utterly unheard of beyond the borders of the town where he was born.

To the end of his days, and with good reason, Whitefield never ceased to magnify the divine grace that had saved him. But under the mistaken notion that the blacker he painted himself the more he glorified God, he unconsciously fell into the habit of exaggerating his badness. During his first voyage to America he wrote out an account of his early years. If we were to accept the description at its face value, we would be shocked at some things he relates. According to his own statement, he was depraved from the day he was born, and as time went on he broke the Commandments and was guilty of the most scandalous conduct. And yet, in spite of his appalling catalogue of misdeeds, we have reason to believe that he was not worse, but much better than the average boy and young man in Gloucester. He was never vicious, and in his wrongdoing there was often a curious mingling of good and bad. Occasionally he stole money from his mother, but more than likely he hurried off to

BORN AND BORN AGAIN

give half of it to a poor family; and when he took books that did not belong to him, often they were devotional books.

Two centuries ago England had no regular public-school system, and a poor boy stood but a slim chance of obtaining an education. In Gloucester, happily, there was an endowed school, connected with the Saint Mary de Crypt Church. A limited number of boys were received, and when he was twelve years old young Whitefield was admitted as a pupil. In accord with the ideas of those days, he was almost at once set to work on Latin; but far more important, his genius on the rostrum was quickly seen, and he soon became the star speaker on all public occasions. At that time, in most schools, much was made of dramatic performances, and this mightily appealed to George. He grew passionately fond of reading plays and then of acting them, and more than once he neglected his other studies, and remained home for days at a time to prepare himself to take part in a school exhibition. Often he was dressed up as a girl, a fact that in after years filled him with shame and remorse.

As he approached his fifteenth birthday he decided to leave school and go to work. Apparently, a university course was out of the question, and, as he tells us, "more learning I thought would spoil me for a tradesman." So for eighteen months he was in the employ of his mother at the Bell Inn. "I put on my blue apron and my snuffers [to trim or

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extinguish the candles], washed mops, cleaned rooms, and, in one word, became professed and common drawer," or bartender, as we would call it. But the lad was restless; this was not his place and he knew it. A divine Hand was upon him; a divine Voice was calling him. Mind and soul were in a tumult. He had all manner of conflicting experiences. One day he would be carried out of himself, filled with "unspeakable rapture"; the next he would be in the depths, yielding to sin. In a burst of confidence he unbosomed his heart to his sister: "God intends something for me which we know not of." Secretly he longed to go to Oxford, for he had a strange feeling that he ought to be a preacher. It was in his blood. His great-grandfather Whitefield and his great-uncle had both been ministers, and in the intervals between handing out drinks he was composing sermons.

One day something happened. A former school-mate, like George, a poor lad, had entered the University. When home on a vacation, he called on George and his mother, and reported that he had just completed a term, and after meeting every expense had one penny to the good. "Upon that my mother immediately cried out, 'This will do for my son!' Then, turning to me, she said, 'Will you go to Oxford, George?' I replied, 'With all my heart!'" The matter was settled then and there, and it marked the beginning of a new life. A week later he was back at the Saint Mary de Crypt

BORN AND BORN AGAIN

School for further preparation, and within a year he was an undergraduate at Pembroke College, Oxford.

Like his young friend, he had to earn his way. The great majority of the students were from wealthy families, but it was the custom to admit a few from humble homes and let them support themselves by waiting on the tables of Fellows and Gentlemen Commoners. They were called "servitors," and it is interesting to know that the father of John Wesley, and a number of other well-known Oxford graduates, belonged to this class.

Whitefield entered college late in the fall of 1732, shortly before his eighteenth birthday. The Wesleys had already been there for quite a time, and the little group nicknamed "Methodists," or, "The Holy Club," had been meeting regularly for three years. Whitefield had heard of them before going to Oxford, and he longed to know them, but a year passed before he obtained an introduction. At once he was welcomed to the society as a brother beloved. He had felt very lonely during the opening months. Socially he enjoyed no standing with the great bulk of the students, and the religious atmosphere was anything but congenial to a young man who wanted to be a genuine Christian.

When Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity in 1662, requiring all clergymen and University men to conform to the usages of the Established Church, on pain of expulsion, not only were two

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thousand of the ablest occupants of English pulpits driven from their parishes, but the universities also lost many of their finest professors and Fellows and undergraduates. Spiritual life at once declined and almost died out, and a moral lethargy that was utterly deadening overspread the colleges. Religion became a mere form, and in Whitefield's day even the form was sneered at. Deism was rampant, and it was freely said that the universities were "dens of infidelity." No wonder that, with religious restraints gone, morals collapsed. Profanity, gambling, and drunkenness were but outstanding offenses in a long train of evils.

The one spiritual oasis at Oxford was the Holy Club, and fortunate was the student from Gloucester when he was admitted. And yet, even the Club could assist him only in a measure. He had been a nominal Christian since he was sixteen, if not before, but, like the Wesleys, he was to pass through a long and painful struggle before entering into the full joy and liberty of a son of God. If there was ever a young fellow that needed religious help, it was George Whitefield. John and Charles Wesley befriended him. They were the soul of kindness in encouraging and counseling the boy, so many years their junior. But at that time they themselves were groping in the dark, and there was little they could do for others.

What a half-decade it was, from 1730 to 1735, in the life of this young servitor at Pembroke! He

BORN AND BORN AGAIN

was desperately in earnest, determined to win God's favor though he perished in the attempt. He has left us an account of the austerities which from time to time he practiced. "I began to leave off eating fruits and such like. . . . I always chose the worst sort of food. . . . My apparel was mean. I wore a patched gown and dirty shoes." For a long while he regularly fasted "twice a week for thirty-six hours together," and "I fasted myself almost to death all the forty days of Lent." He deliberately exposed himself to the cold "till part of one of my hands was quite black." "My continued abstinence . . . so emaciated my body that I could scarce creep upstairs." In his weakened state he became subject to terrifying hallucinations. "Whole days and weeks have I spent in lying prostrate on the ground," writhing under satanic torments. At last his condition grew so serious that his tutor was alarmed and called a physician. No wonder that the tutor, as well as the friends in Gloucester when they heard of these things, were sure the young man had gone mad. He was not mad, but he was struggling toward the light, and he had not yet learned to say:

"In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling."

He thought he could earn his own way, and he failed.

When his agony of soul was at the limit, help

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came from an unexpected source. In 1678 a young clergyman by the name of Henry Scougal died in Scotland. He was only twenty-eight, but he had lived long enough to write a book entitled *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. In these days both the writer and his book are almost unheard of, but God used that little volume in a wonderful way. It fell into the hands of Charles Wesley, and proved such a blessing to him that he passed it on to his friend Whitefield. As the young man read, the light began to dawn and he saw where he had blundered. "God soon showed me that 'true religion was a union of the soul with God, and Christ formed within us.'" Then "a ray of divine light was instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature." Whitefield dated his actual conversion about seven weeks after Easter, in the year 1735. A few months before he died, he said: "I know the place. . . . Whenever I go to Oxford, I cannot help running to the spot where Jesus Christ first revealed himself to me, and gave me the new birth." Henceforth he was indeed a new man. The haunting fears, the self-torture, the morose temper, were gone. He was jubilant in the peace and comfort of a simple faith in Jesus Christ. No wonder that to his dying day the New Birth held the supreme place in his thought and in his preaching.

CHAPTER II
FIRST VENTURES

Christ is the believer's Hollow Square; and if we keep close in that, we are impregnable. Here only I find my refuge. Garrisoned in this, I can bid defiance to men and devils.

Our senses are the landing-ports of our spiritual enemies. When Eve began to gaze on the forbidden fruit with her eyes, she began to long after it with her heart.

CHAPTER II

FIRST VENTURES

WHITEFIELD was victor, but he bore the scars of conflict to the close of life. There can be no doubt that the ill health from which he suffered more or less all through the years was due in part to the harsh way he treated his body while at Oxford. As an immediate outcome he was compelled to leave college in May, 1735, and return to Gloucester for nine months of recuperation. But while he rested he was not idle. He talked with a number of young people, and a society for prayer and Bible study was formed for those who, like himself, were eager to become more proficient Christians. Every day he called on the poor and the sick, and he made frequent visits to the county jail. He read many valuable books, and did his best to grow strong in soul as well as in body.

As we have already seen, when a mere boy, before he ever went to Oxford, George had a strange presentiment that some time he would be a preacher. Quite innocently he chanced one day to mention this to his mother, but the good woman, regarding it as a bit of youthful arrogance, exclaimed: "What does the boy mean? Pri' thee hold thy tongue!" But after entering college the divine

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call grew so clear that every doubt vanished. The only question then was, When should he take the step? He wanted to delay till he was at least twenty-three. He was in mortal fear lest he enter the sacred work prematurely. The matter came to an issue rather unexpectedly toward the close of his rest period. Happily, the Bishop of Gloucester was Doctor Benson, a man of spiritual devotion as well as good sense. Unbeknown to Whitefield he had kept an eye on him for some time, and was greatly pleased with the youth. Sending for him one day, he announced that he would gladly ordain him to the ministry whenever he wished. The young man was in a tumult of desire and dread. He was only twenty-one. He longed to enter on what he knew would be his life-work, but was he ready?

He could never forget the wrestling of those critical days. In one of the last sermons he preached in London, only a year before his death, he said: "I never prayed against any corruption I had in my life, so much as I did against going into holy orders. I have prayed a thousand times till the sweat has dropped from my face like rain, that God, of his infinite mercy, would not let me enter the church before he called me. I remember once in Gloucester—I know the room; I look up at the window when I am there and walk along the street; I know the bedside, and the floor upon which I prostrated myself, and cried: Lord, I cannot go!

FIRST VENTURES

I shall be puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil. I am unfit to preach in thy great name. Send me not, Lord, send me not yet!" " But the Lord sent him at once, and Whitefield never ceased to be grateful that at least one of his prayers had not been answered.

He was ordained deacon on June 20, 1736, and "when the bishop laid his hands upon my head, I offered up my whole spirit, soul, and body, to the service of God's sanctuary." The following Sunday he preached his first sermon, not, as we might have expected, in some out-of-the-way rural community, but right there in Gloucester, in the ancient Church of Saint Mary de Crypt, where he had been baptized and had grown up as a boy. No wonder the town was stirred. Could it be that this young fellow, who but a short time before had been mopping floors and handing out drinks, or picking up a little knowledge in a charity school, scarcely better than one of the rabble—that he was now within a few days of receiving a bachelor's degree from Oxford University, that he was already a deacon in the Church of England and authorized to speak as an ambassador of Almighty God?

How the people flocked to the church! Of course the mother was there, trembling but joyous, and the rest of the kindred, and the old-time friends and neighbors and schoolmates, and a host of others, eager to see and hear. When it was all over, the young preacher wrote to a friend: "Curiosity, as

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you may easily guess, drew a large congregation together. The sight at first a little awed me; but I was comforted with a heartfelt sense of the Divine Presence, and soon found the unspeakable advantage of having been accustomed to public speaking when a boy at school, and of exhorting and teaching the prisoners, and poor people at their private houses, whilst at the University. By these means I was kept from being daunted overmuch. As I proceeded I perceived the fire kindled, till at last, though so young, and amidst a crowd who knew me from my childhood days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel authority. A few mocked, but most for the present seemed struck; and I have since heard that a complaint has been made to the bishop that I drove fifteen mad. The worthy prelate, as I am informed, wished that the madness might not be forgotten before the next Sunday."

This first sermon in the marvelous series of eighteen thousand that fell from those eloquent lips, was thoroughly characteristic of the man. "He preached like a lion," exclaimed one of his hearers. On the Saturday preceding this memorable service, Whitefield said to a friend: "I shall displease some, . . . but I must tell them the truth, or otherwise I shall not be a faithful minister of Christ." Fearless, fervent, tenderly persuasive and with heavenly unction, thus the twenty-one-year-old preacher began his ministry, and thus he went on. A few

FIRST VENTURES

days later he was back in Oxford, where he received his degree of Bachelor of Arts. Many of his friends urged him to accept a parish in or near Gloucester, but the university town appealed to him more strongly. The Wesleys were in Georgia, and the work of the Methodists, so dear to his heart, had seriously declined. Here seemed to be the greater need, and nowhere was it more pathetic than among the inmates of the Oxford jail.

As we read the story of those early days, we are constantly impressed with the intense concern that Whitefield and his fellow Methodists felt for the prison unfortunates; and well they might. In some respects civilization had made striking advances, but in the treatment of crime and criminals England was still back in the Dark Ages, and the grossest barbarities were practiced. People were thrust into jail on the flimsiest pretext and with little regard to their innocence or guilt. More than two hundred offenses, many of them extremely petty, were punishable with death. At times the gallows became so glutted that criminals whom the overworked hangmen could not attend to were shipped off to penal colonies. It was an open question whether the gibbet or transportation was not preferable to remaining in prison. Jail conditions were frightful. The wardenship was sold to the highest bidder, and the one who obtained it was out for the last shilling he could make. There was no pretense of providing adequate ventilation. Every

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window in a building was taxed, and as the warden had to pay for the jail windows, he saw to it that only enough were put in to save the inmates from suffocation. Picture prison cells, with men, women, and children, the beastly and the innocent, huddled together; the foulest immoralities; earth floors, sometimes covered with an inch of water, swarming with rats and vermin; an open sewer running through the center; the dead bodies of criminals allowed to lie near by till the stench rose to high heaven; some of the inmates mere skeletons from lack of food; others locked in with fellow-prisoners down with smallpox; many sick and dying with the dreaded "jail-fever," human beings with immortal souls, almost as neglected religiously as if they had been cattle. At one time John Wesley was so stirred that he wrote a letter of protest to the London papers: "Of all the seats of woe on this side of hell, few, I suppose, exceed or even equal Newgate"; but there were a number that did even exceed Newgate.

Is it any wonder that such tragic and pitiful conditions mightily appealed to the little Oxford brotherhood, and that when Whitefield learned that in the absence of the Wesleys the prison work was lagging, he longed to get back and urge it forward? Nothing these young men ever did was more desperately needed and had more of the Christ spirit in it than the visitation of the jails. Whitefield's opportunities were limited, but at least he was able

FIRST VENTURES

to do something around Oxford; he could counsel and pray with the prisoners, and he could use funds intrusted to him for the purpose, in helping those who had been put in jail for petty debts. He was thoroughly happy in his work, and he fully expected to be busied in these and in similar activities for several years. But God had other plans.

In the midsummer of 1736 there came urgent word for him to hurry to London, to serve for a few weeks as supply curate at the Tower. He hesitated; he had never been farther away than Oxford. London—the vast metropolis! A thousand misgivings filled his mind. But the call was imperative and he went. His experiences there were not altogether delightful. He tells us that as he “passed along the streets, many came out of their shops to see so young a person in gown and cassock; and one cried out, ‘There’s a boy parson!’ which served to mortify my pride.” He preached his first Sunday morning sermon in Bishopsgate-street Church. As he went up the pulpit stairs he felt decidedly uncomfortable, for “almost all seemed to sneer at me on account of my youth.” But he had not been speaking many minutes before both he and his hearers became absorbed in something more important than age. No doubt Whitefield was unusually boyish-looking at this time, but Doctor Gillies, who for years was his intimate friend, tells us he was “graceful and well proportioned. His stature was rather above the middle size. His com-

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plexion was very fair. His eyes were of a dark blue color, and small, but sprightly. He had a squint with one of them, occasioned either by the ignorance or carelessness of the nurse who attended him in the measles, when he was about four years old. In his youth he was very slender, . . . but about the fortieth year of his age he began to grow corpulent."

He remained in London only a couple of months, but this was enough to give him a certain self-confidence and home-feeling, as well as standing, in the great city where, through the coming years, he was to do such a mighty work. His preaching in churches and prisons made so deep an impression that people from all over London flocked to hear him. When he went back to Oxford, once more he expected to settle down, but again the Divine Will intervened. For a few weeks he helped a friend in a rural parish, and then, in December, almost on his twenty-second birthday, he took the momentous step which led him out of the regular ministry. Henceforth he was to be missionary and evangelist-at-large.

CHAPTER III
A LAND IN DARKNESS

The Lord empties before he fills; humbles before he exalts.

All the promises of the Gospel, all that is said of God and Christ, can do us no good except that God and Christ are ours. The devils can say, "Oh God!" but the devils cannot say, "My God!" That is a privilege peculiar to God's chosen people.

CHAPTER III

A LAND IN DARKNESS

To appreciate the significance of the religious movement in which Whitefield and the Wesleys were the outstanding figures we must bear in mind conditions in England two hundred years ago. At no time in the history of the Island Kingdom were morals and religion more deeply submerged than in the opening decades of the eighteenth century. When Charles the Second came to the throne, in 1660, the popular reaction from the stern measures of Cromwell was swift and fierce. Led on by high society, the nation went in for a "wide-open" policy. Soon there came the notorious Act of Uniformity, foolish as it was unjust, which in one day drove from their parishes nearly two thousand rectors and vicars, the very men who at Oxford and Cambridge, in London and in all the leading towns throughout the land, represented the highest learning and devotion of the church. It was intended as a body blow to Puritanism, but tenfold worse was its deadening effect on Conformity itself.

As the years went by, spasmodic efforts were made to improve the situation, but gradually almost the entire nation seemed to settle down into an easy complacency, which, had it not been broken, would have proved fatal. The effect on public morals

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was ruinous. Crime became rampant and unchecked. The streets of London swarmed with desperate characters, many of whom the timid and oftentimes decrepit constables were afraid to arrest. Robberies and hold-ups were so constant that London almost ceased to be a civilized town.

The crime mania invaded the higher as well as the lower circles. The Mohock Club was made up entirely of young villains from "polite" society. They were accustomed to sally forth after an evening of hard drinking, to engage in their favorite sports. Some would "tip the lion," which amiable pastime consisted in seizing a passer-by and squeezing his nose flat on his face, and gouging out his eyes with their fingers. Or they might turn "dancing-masters," and, forming a circle around their unhappy victim, stimulate him to vigorous capers by pricking his legs with their swords, till he fell exhausted at their feet. Woe to the women who were caught! Well for them if they escaped with simply being shut up in barrels and rolled down the rocky steep of Snow Hill. The street perils were so great that no one who could afford it thought of going out at night without a strong bodyguard of retainers, armed to the teeth. Traveling in the country was equally dangerous. Highway bandits, well-trained in robbery and murder, infested the roads. As late as 1751 Horace Walpole wrote, "One is forced to travel even at noon as if one were going to battle."

A LAND IN DARKNESS

Drinking and drunkenness were well-nigh universal, and were regarded as quite the proper thing. When Robert Walpole and his father would sit down together for a carouse, the elder was accustomed to pour out a double draught for his son, saying, "Come, Robert, you shall drink twice while I drink once; for I will not permit the son in his sober senses to be witness of the intoxication of his father." But some years later, when Robert was prime minister, he himself felt no shame in being seen drunk. His political foe, Lord Bolingbroke, would sit up all night drinking, and in the morning bind a wet napkin about his head, and then, when sufficiently sobered, hurry off to his official duties, without a moment's sleep. It would be interesting as well as instructive to know how far English policies both in home and in world affairs, through a long and critical period, were determined by statesmen befuddled with liquor.

The drink-habit among the poor knew no limit. Never was it more widespread than at the very time when Whitefield was acting as bartender at the Bell Inn. Gin had been introduced and all were calling for it. In London every sixth house was a saloon. In front of them signs were placed, offering to make a man drunk for a penny, dead-drunk for twopence, while down cellar straw was spread out where the wretches might sleep off their debauch. The nation was almost drowned in liquor. At one time the total output reached an average of

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two or three barrels annually for every man, woman, and child in the realm. And yet the people cried for more, still more! The ruinous effects became clearer every day. Crime and immorality steadily increased; the birth-rate declined; tens of thousands were sick and dying from diseases directly caused by drink. Sensible men became alarmed. Doctors and others who realized the havoc that was being wrought, freely predicted that the nation itself would be destroyed unless the evil was checked. Restraining laws were passed, but they accomplished little. A mightier cure was needed, and that cure no Parliament could provide.

If gambling was less common than drinking, it was merely because it was a form of luxury that only the well-to-do could afford to indulge in to any extent. But Swift assures us that it was "the bane of English nobility." It led to the permanent injury, if not the complete downfall, of some of the nation's most gifted leaders.

But no curse of that degenerate age left in its train such deep and ghastly marks as did the vice of immorality. It invaded all classes of society, high and low. The royal household was a notorious offender. Eminent servants of the state, even a prime minister, were quite willing to appear at the theater with their mistresses. The courtly Lord Chesterfield thought it proper to instruct his son in "the art of seduction as part of a polite education." Personal purity and domestic fidelity were

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laughed at as altogether impossible, if, indeed, desirable. The average theater of to-day may not be an ideal place for the saints, but it is a paradise in comparison with the playhouses of Whitefield's boyhood. At that time shows of such a character were presented that ladies who were determined to witness them and whose sense of modesty was by no means fastidious, were impelled to wear masks to conceal their identity. On the drawing-room tables of fashionable homes were books by popular authors of the day, books that were freely read in parlor gatherings with many a jocose comment and with no trace of shame, yet so foul that in these times no decent person would think of touching them even in the privacy of his own chamber. If there is any lingering doubt as to the indecencies tolerated two hundred years ago, one has only to take from the library shelf of the British Museum a huge portfolio of broadsheets and handbills, such as were once commonly distributed, but so obscene that anyone who attempted to put them out at the present time would speedily find himself behind prison bars.

We are not surprised that in the period which we are studying there were gross scandals in regard to marriage. The laws respecting this solemn compact were extremely lax, and almost any couple that desired could be wedded without delay. There were "marrying parsons" then as now, but the brand was the lowest of the low. Most of them,

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while claiming to be priests, were men of infamous lives, ready to stoop to any abomination. One was reported to have married an average of six thousand couples a year, while another boasted that he had performed one hundred and seventy-three ceremonies in a single day. In most instances the contracting parties had known each other less than a week, and very often only a few hours. In many cases the whole thing was done—put through very likely by designing persons—when one or the other or both parties were drunk, and what was their astonishment and dismay, when awaking, to find that unwittingly they had entered into an alliance so ironclad that it could be dissolved only by special act of Parliament! The untold miseries that were entailed can readily be imagined.

We pause now to ask, Where was the church all this time? What was she doing? England professed to be a Christian nation; there were ten thousand clergymen and millions of communicant members, and a vast establishment, the growth of centuries. Then why this moral degradation? The answer is simple: in large measure the church had lost her power. Not that the nation was utterly depraved, for both in pulpit and pew were men eminent for godliness, but their number was comparatively small. Upon the land as a whole there rested, like a dismal pall, a moral and spiritual lethargy. When Bishop Butler wrote his famous *Analogy* he declared that “it had come to be taken

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for granted that Christianity is not so much as a subject for inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious"; and such was the religious indifference that no one cared. On his return to France in 1731, after two years in England, Montesquieu reported that the English people had no religion, that when the subject was mentioned in higher social circles it excited mirth, and that not more than four or five members of the House of Commons were regular attendants at church. Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages," and himself a clergyman of the Established Church, declared that in his own communion "a converted minister was as great a wonder as a comet"; and Isaac Watts assures us the situation among the Dissenters was likewise deplorable. It is no exaggeration to say that "the English clergy were the idlest and most lifeless in the world."¹ Their standard of conduct was extremely low. Men who ought to have been in prayer or at study or visiting their flocks, too often were fox-hunting or, far worse, gambling and drinking. Intoxication was a prevalent vice among them. On a certain occasion the Bishop of Chester rebuked one of his clergy for drunkenness.

"But, my lord, I never was drunk on duty."

"On duty!" exclaimed the prelate; "and pray, sir, when is a clergyman not on duty?"

"True, my lord," said the other; "I never thought of that."

¹ Green's *A Short History of the English People*, page 739.

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Even Lord Bolingbroke, notorious as a gay liver and an infidel, was scandalized by what he saw all about him. "Let me seriously tell you," said he, pointing the finger of scorn at a recreant clergyman, "that the greatest miracle in the world is the subsistence of Christianity, and its continued preservation as a religion, when the preaching of it is committed to the care of such un-Christian men as you."

Is it any wonder that the pulpit in those days was for the most part utterly dead? It was out of the question for such men to condemn sin or to assail the glaring evils of the age. As a rule, their sermons were colorless essays, barren of any vital religion, and read in a spiritless manner. At a still later date Sir William Blackstone, the eminent jurist, visited all the leading churches in London, and "heard not one discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero."

If there was a period in all her history when England and her sons everywhere needed the message of a veritable prophet of the Lord, it was in those critical decades of the eighteenth century. We will search in vain the annals of all time for a clearer evidence of the presence of God in the affairs of men than we find in the appearance, at the hour of supreme need, of Whitefield and the Wesleys as the prophetic leaders in that religious movement which turned England and America upside down and left a permanent impress on the whole world.

CHAPTER IV
LEAPING INTO FAME

The bank of heaven is a sure bank. I have drawn thousands of bills upon it, and never had one sent back protested.

Be much in secret prayer. When you are about the common business of life, be much in ejaculatory prayer. Send, from time to time, short letters post to heaven, upon the wings of faith. They will reach the very heart of God, and will return to you loaded with blessings.

CHAPTER IV

LEAPING INTO FAME

IN October, 1735, the Wesley brothers sailed for Georgia, John as a missionary to the Indians, and Charles as secretary to General Oglethorpe, governor of the colony. The following summer, while supplying in London, Whitefield received letters from his friends across the sea, describing the field and the need of more workers. He longed to join them, and had he been left to himself, would probably have embarked in the first boat bound for Savannah. But all to whom he mentioned his desire insisted that such a step would be rash; at least he must wait for a clearer opening. He patiently bided his time.

Early in December word came that Charles Wesley had unexpectedly arrived in England, seeking recruits; and a few days later letters reached Whitefield from John Wesley, praying that God would speedily send helpers. "What if thou art the man, Mr. Whitefield? . . . Do you ask me what you shall have? Food to eat and raiment to put on; a house to lay your head in, such as your Lord had not; and a crown of glory that fadeth not away." "Upon reading this," says Whitefield, "my heart leaped within me, and, as it were, echoed to the call." The question was settled there

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and then. In Charles Wesley's Journal, under date of December 22, 1736, we find this brief but momentous entry: "I received a letter from Mr. Whitefield, offering himself to go to Georgia." The young man expected to embark at once, but unlooked-for delays arose. The ship was not ready; and then Oglethorpe, who was to be in charge of the outgoing party, for various reasons kept postponing the date of departure, so that a whole year elapsed before they finally sailed. But not a moment was wasted; the time of waiting was crowded with events of tremendous importance.

It was during this period that Whitefield really "found himself." He fairly leaped into fame, and his name became a household word. What an amazing change a few months wrought! In June we find him wrestling in prayer that his ordination may be delayed; he has one lone sermon; he feels he must have at least a hundred before he will dare to begin preaching; he ventures into the pulpit for the first time, with quaking limbs. The weeks pass, and soon we see him delivering sermons day after day in the leading churches with all the abandon of a veteran; he fairly exults; the king has come to his throne.

He journeyed in triumph from place to place. He made a brief visit to his old home-town of Gloucester and preached to crowds. "I began to grow a little popular," is his naïve comment. He went on to Bristol, at that time the second largest



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city in England, and the clergy vied with each other in urging him to occupy their pulpits. He also preached before the mayor and the Corporation at their insistent request. A few weeks later he was in Bristol again, preaching five times a week. "It was wonderful," he wrote in his Journal, "to see how the people hung upon the rails of the organ loft, climbed upon the leads of the church, and made the church itself so hot with their breath that the steam would fall from the pillars like drops of rain." The throngs were so dense that he could scarcely make his way to the pulpit. When he left, at the end of the month, multitudes were in tears, and he slipped out of town in the small hours of the morning, to avoid the great company that had intended to follow him on horseback and in coaches.

He several times visited Bath, England's most fashionable resort. The notorious "Beau" Nash was the undisputed dictator of the place, but this did not hinder the young Methodist itinerant from being repeatedly invited to preach in the cathedral pulpit, where his sermons created a mighty stir among the élite hearers.

He nowhere made a deeper impression than in London, where he spent several months. As a rule, he preached nine times a week, but he could not begin to meet the calls that poured in upon him. He was busy from early till late. "On Sunday mornings," he tells us, "long before day, you might see streets filled with people going to church, with their

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lanterns in their hands, and hear them conversing about the things of God." The crowds were so great that constables were stationed at the church doors to keep order. "The sight of the congregations was awful. One might, as it were, walk upon the people's heads, and thousands went away from the largest churches for want of room. They were all attention, and heard like people hearing for eternity." Soon the tide of enthusiasm ran so high that "I could no longer walk on foot as usual, but was constrained to go in a coach, from place to place, to avoid the hosannas of the multitude. They grew quite extravagant in their applauses, and, had it not been for my compassionate High Priest, popularity would have destroyed me. I used to plead with him to take me by the hand, and lead me unhurt through this fiery furnace. He heard my request, and gave me to see the vanity of all commendation but his own."

There is something deeply pathetic in the artless account which the young man gives of his immense popularity, and of the determined effort to remain true to his best self and to God while passing through what was indeed a "fiery furnace." Remember that it was less than six years since Whitefield was a common bartender, without the slightest prospect of anything better in life. Neither he nor any of his friends dreamed that he would ever be heard of beyond the borders of his native town. And yet, lo and behold! a mere stripling of twenty-

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two, he now stands before the world an alumnus of a renowned university; though only a deacon in the opening year of his ministry, he is filling some of the greatest pulpits of the land, and receiving the plaudits of the people as no preacher has done for generations. Whitefield was human, intensely human. We are drawn to him all the more because he was a man of like passions with ourselves. The marvel is not that, in spite of all his efforts to hold steady, there were times when he became somewhat inflated, but, rather, that he was not ruined by his popularity. True, the multitudes, high and low, of every denomination, thronged his ministry, but what went they out to see and hear? A mere artist in human speech? A juggler of moral phrases? A dispenser of soft words? Nay, verily, but a prophet of the Lord! Be it said to Whitefield's everlasting credit, that from his first sermon to the end of his career, whether in cathedral or in field, in cottage or in palace, before the great or the lowly, he preached what he believed to be the eternal verities of the faith. Without fear or favor he condemned sin and exalted righteousness.

Is it not singular that in the very year, 1737, when Whitefield was in all his glory and passing through a "fiery furnace" in his endeavor to keep humble, Wesley was over in Georgia, feeling the heat of quite a different sort of furnace, as he endured one of the bitterest trials of his life? It seemed to him that the mission into which he had

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put his very soul had been a failure and worse than a failure. In spiritual agony he cried, "I went to America to convert the Indians, but, Oh! who shall convert me?" Though more than eleven years Whitefield's senior, he had not yet entered into the rich experience which the younger already enjoyed. Presently he was to receive that baptism of power which would make of him a new man; but in the meantime he was groping in the dark, while the boy preacher was marching through the land with the shout of triumph. As a matter of fact, it was Whitefield, and not Wesley, who first introduced Methodism to the world; who, by his marvelous preaching, set people to thinking and talking about this strange thing; who aroused both curiosity and enthusiasm, and who prepared the way for the still mightier work which was to be done by the favored sons of the Epworth manse.

Those were happy days for Whitefield, and no wonder; but it was not all joy. If he had friends, there were likewise enemies. Already might be heard the first mutterings of that opposition which would presently become fierce and malignant, and which would follow him to the end of his life—and beyond. In caricature and through warnings in the press his foes were beginning to stir up the people against him. The truth was that his preaching was too plain. Unconverted ministers did not enjoy sermons on the New Birth. The laymen might stand it, but the clergy were soon in torments. And

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more than this, he was altogether too friendly with Dissenters. To be sure, he himself was a member of the Established Church, but he saw no reason for despising good men who happened to belong to some other communion. In these and in sundry other ways he disturbed the peace of mind of many people.

So we are quite within bounds in suspecting that when, from time to time, he reiterated his intention to go to Georgia—a wilderness as far removed from England as two or three times the circumference of the globe in these days—the news brought decided relief to some troubled hearts. Never for a moment, during the year of waiting, had his purpose wavered. True, his mother was heartbroken, and friends reminded him that if he wanted to convert Indians he could find suitable subjects at Kingswood, where the colliers were as wild and savage as any red-skins in America. And there were others who would sorely miss him. Two hundred years ago the only chance that a poor boy in England had to obtain an education was at one of the Charity Schools that philanthropic individuals and organizations had founded. Whitefield could never forget his own humble home and his early struggle for knowledge, and wherever he had preached and permission was granted, he made an appeal for the support of these schools. In this way he had collected a thousand pounds, a very large sum when we remember the value of money at that time.

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But all the while he was restless. His heart was beyond the sea and he longed to be off. At the very close of this eventful year sudden word came that the ship in which he was to sail was about to leave, and immediately he went on board. They proceeded as far as Deal, where they were detained for several weeks, and here a singular thing happened. On the morning when the ship was to weigh anchor and continue its voyage, a vessel from America crept into the harbor, with John Wesley on board. Great was his astonishment to learn that Whitefield was just sailing. At once he cast lots, and concluded that the young man ought not to go, and he hurried off a brief note advising him to return home. Then, without waiting for an answer, he landed, and started post-haste for London. He had had a bitter time in Georgia and he hoped that no friend of his would risk a similar experience. But in this case, Wesley, usually so wise in counsel, seriously blundered. We dread to think what the consequence would have been, for England as well as for America, if Whitefield had yielded and abandoned his mission. Happily his mind and heart were fixed. God had called him; he knew it; and with no trace of misgiving he went straight forward.

CHAPTER V
IN PERILS IN THE SEA

I lead a pilgrim life ; God give me a pilgrim heart !

We must be made perfect by sufferings. If we do not meet them in our younger days, we shall certainly have them in the decline of life. Trials, at such a season, are like the finishing strokes of the limner's pencil. They serve, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, to complete the new creature, and make it fit for heaven.

CHAPTER V

IN PERILS IN THE SEA

BETWEEN the opening of 1738 and the close of 1769 Whitefield crossed the Atlantic thirteen times. It is doubtful if this record was equaled by anyone not a seafaring man. In the eighteenth century no one thought of taking an ocean voyage for mere pleasure; it was serious business. Very few crossed the sea even once, and still fewer risked it a second time.

Great was the contrast between the mammoth liners of our own day, of nearly sixty thousand tons, and nearly one thousand feet in length, racing back and forth in five days, at almost railroad speed, heedless of storm or calm, and the small vessels that Whitefield knew! Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe with five ships, the largest of less than one hundred tons and the smallest of only fifteen. In the middle of the eighteenth century many ships regularly engaged in the trans-Atlantic trade were of less than fifty tons burden. Doubtless those in which Whitefield sailed were larger, but at best they were mere cockle-shells. No matter how staunchly put together, the constant buffeting of wind and wave would soon start the seams. The experience of a certain Captain David

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Lindsay was a common one. He was four thousand miles from his home port in Rhode Island, and his tiny brigantine of forty tons in bad condition. After surveying her he made the gloomy comment: "My vesiel will not last to proceed farr. We can see day Lite al round her bow under deck." But he must get back to America in some way. He made a few patches and then started. It was a voyage of months, and for twenty-two days a storm raged without ceasing. The sails were torn to tatters and floods of water poured in at the open seams; but somehow they finally limped into port.

Whoever ventured on the great deep took his life in his hands, and the cry to man the pumps was almost as familiar as the call to raise or lower the sails. On the contrary, a long-continued calm might be as serious as a storm. Many are the tales of horror, where food and water gave out and the hapless crews suffered torture worse than death. More than this, there were dangers from enemy ships. We must bear in mind that during a good part of the eighteenth century England was at war with France and Spain, and in spite of occasional peace treaties there was not a day from 1700 to 1763 when English ships were safe at sea. Privateers swarmed everywhere, ready to swoop down on a defenseless merchantman, sinking the ship or taking it into port as a prize, and throwing the crew into prison.

Those were indeed perilous times. No wonder

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that in the church services the prayer for sailors was recited most fervently, and that in every hymn book were oft-sung petitions for those out on the "vast and furious" ocean.

And then not only were there serious dangers. As a rule, a sea voyage was anything but comfortable. The towering "castles," fore and aft, which were the familiar features of earlier ships, had been considerably cut down in Whitefield's time, but the only sleeping accommodations worth the name were still at either end. Imagine being cooped up in such a place for two or three months! Very likely the captain is a tyrant, the crew mutinous, and the passengers anything but congenial. When the weather is fair one may walk the deck for a few paces, but for weeks at a time the passengers are shut below while the small craft is swept by the waves. Again and again the bunks are swamped, and if it is winter there is the freezing cold and no fire. After the first few days the provisions begin to grow stale, and they do not improve as the months pass.

Picture the discomforts and the perils, and then think what it must have been to make the venture thirteen times. Happily, Whitefield was a good sailor; some of his voyages were comparatively pleasant; and, best of all, he never for a moment doubted that he was on the King's business. But in following his career, we do well not to overlook the real heroism of the man, who, like the apostle

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of old, could say of himself that oftentimes he was "in perils in the sea."

As nearly as we can estimate, Whitefield was actually at sea for a total of seven hundred and thirty-two days, or almost exactly two years. This does not include the weeks he spent at anchor in harbors, waiting for favorable winds, or the various trips along the American and English seaboard.

The voyages to this side were almost always longer than those in the opposite direction. As is well known, the prevailing winds are from the west, and for the old-time sailor, with his unwieldy craft, it was hard work to get across. As a rule he had to fight his way mile by mile, and he used to talk of going "uphill to America." Whitefield's longest voyage took just eleven weeks, and was made in 1744, from Plymouth to York, Maine. His shortest trip was when he returned to England for the last time, in 1765. He was on a fast boat, with good winds, and he landed in twenty-eight days.

Some of his experiences he could never forget. "On December 28, 1737, I left London and went on board the *Whitaker*"; thus he wrote. What a memorable day! For a whole year he had been waiting and longing to start, and now was his chance. The Spaniards in Florida had been threatening the Georgia colonists, and it was decided to send over a regiment of British soldiers to protect the Englishmen. A company was to sail on the *Whitaker*, and Whitefield was to go along as chap-

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lain, and on reaching America he would take charge of the parish of Savannah, to which he had been assigned. Before embarking he spent many hours in prayer with his friends, and they attended the holy communion together. It was a solemn time for the young cleric. The ship stopped at several points on the way down the Channel, being detained three weeks at Deal. Whitefield went ashore nearly every day, and frequently preached and held services of prayer.

On February 2 they finally left the English coast. The little vessel was packed to the gunwales with its human cargo. In addition to the crew, more than a hundred people, including a number of women and children, families of the soldiers, were on board. Every nook and corner was full, and it was indeed a motley crowd. Never was a young preacher of twenty-three put to a sterner test than was George Whitefield, and, be it remembered, never did one meet the test in a nobler and more triumphant spirit.

When he embarked at London the officers, both of the sailors and of the soldiers, looked upon him as an impostor; he was such a boy in appearance; and at first they were inclined to snub him. It was a critical situation. A tactless word or attitude would have ruined him for the whole voyage; but he carried himself with perfect self-poise. He neither cringed nor domineered, but in a quiet, manly spirit he went straight forward and did his

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work, and very soon the general opinion began to change.

On the first Sabbath "nothing was to be seen but cards, and little heard but cursing and blasphemy. I could do no more for a season than, whilst I was waiting, now and then turn my head, by way of reproof, to a lieutenant of the soldiers, who swore as though he was born of a swearing constitution." He intimated to the military captain that he would be glad each day to use a short collect before the officers. "After pausing a while and shaking his head, he answered, 'I think we may, when we have nothing else to do.' "

Whitefield was not in the least discouraged. He at once began holding morning prayers on the deck, let come who would. He seized every chance to preach to the soldiers, and organized groups of them and also of the women for special instruction. He was tireless in his attention to the sick. One night, early in the voyage, a terrific storm burst upon them, and the waves broke through the hatchway and poured down upon the terrified passengers. The little ship was on her beam-ends, and in great peril. Whitefield writes: "I arose and called upon God for myself and those that sailed with me. . . . Then, creeping on my hands and knees, I went between decks, and sang psalms with, and comforted the poor wet people." He adds the interesting item that, in the midst of all the uproar, "I was enabled to finish a sermon before I went to

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bed, which I had begun a few days before, and was never more cheerful in my life." But even Whitefield was mortal, and though he prided himself on his qualities as a sailor, he does admit "being a little sick by the late shaking of the ship, and the heat and the smell of the people between decks."

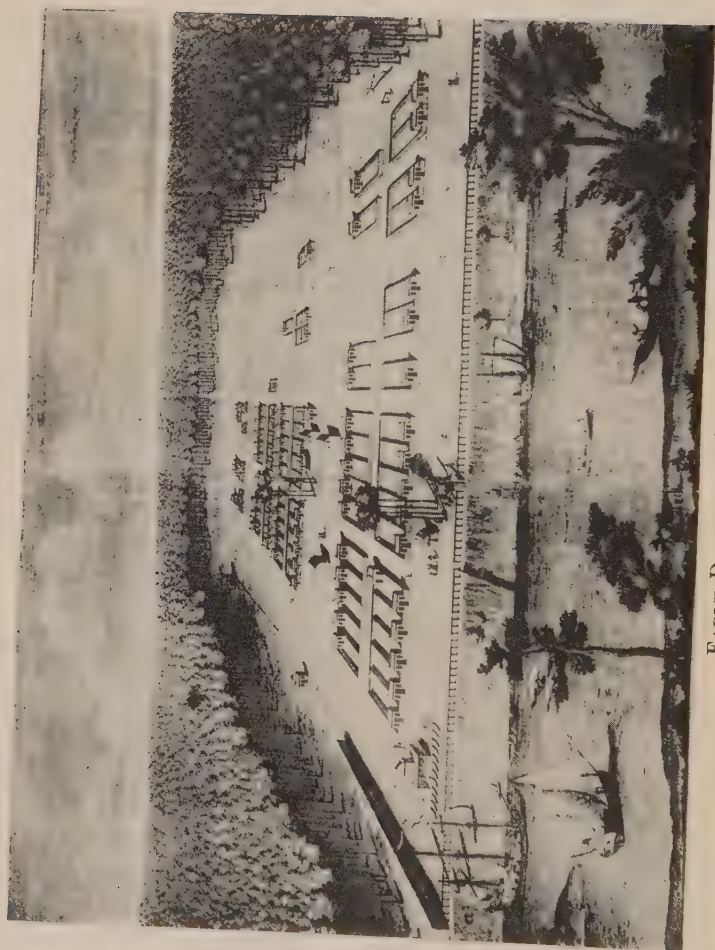
He was alert to every opportunity to say something for his Master. In his Journal we constantly meet references like these: "Breakfasted with some of the gentlemen in the great cabin, who were very civil, and let me put in a word for God"; "Had an hour's conversation with a gentleman on board . . . on our new birth in Christ Jesus"; "Gained an opportunity, by walking at night on deck, to talk closely to the chief mate, and one of the sergeants of the regiment, and hope my words were not altogether spoken in vain"; "About eleven at night went and sat down among the sailors in the steerage, and reasoned with them" concerning the Christian life. His unswerving loyalty to his calling, and his uniform courtesy and kindness of spirit, soon won for Whitefield the respect and friendship of everyone on board. Nor were they slow to recognize the extraordinary ability of their young chaplain. Soon both captains were begging him to regularly conduct morning and evening prayers on deck, and he did so, with a captain standing on either side and the soldiers massed around him.

Two boats, the Amy and Lightfoot, also carry-

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ing soldiers, accompanied the Whitaker, and when the sea was smooth, Whitefield often visited them and held service. Now and then the three ships would draw close together, everyone crowded to the decks, and he would preach, his magnificent voice easily being heard by the entire audience. What scenes those must have been! Nor did he deal in soft things. One day his subject was, "The Eternity of Hell Torments," and he adds, "I was earnest in delivering it, being desirous that none of my dear hearers should experience them." We may well believe he was "earnest," for the sermon made a tremendous impression. On another occasion he preached against drunkenness. It never seems to have occurred to him to experiment with total abstinence, for without the least hesitation he informs us that on this very voyage he was taking along, for the use of his future parishioners, "two hogsheads of fine white wine." Drinking was universal in those days. But drunkenness he abhorred, and the temperance orator never lived who could picture it in more startling colors.

In all ages, profanity, especially among soldiers and sailors, has been a besetting sin. Whitefield lost no chance to deal it a body blow. He well knew whom he was hitting, but he was utterly fearless, and his words reached the mark. One day, at the close of a sermon, Captain Mackay asked the soldiers to stay, and then he humbly confessed to them that he had been a notorious swearer, but that



EARLY DRAWING OF SAVANNAH

IN PERILS IN THE SEA

through the influence of Whitefield's preaching "he had now left off, and he exhorted them, for Christ's sake, to go and do likewise."

The Whitaker and her companions stopped at Gibraltar, to take on more soldiers and sailors, and then they made for Savannah, where they arrived on May 7. Long before the voyage was ended a complete transformation had been wrought on ship-board. Not an oath was heard, many of the soldiers and sailors had been soundly converted, and in the great cabin, where the officers met, religion was a daily subject of conversation. Such was the spiritual triumph of this young preacher on his first voyage, utterly inexperienced in such company but filled with the Holy Ghost.

Four months later he was on the sea again, returning to England to receive his final ordination. As he set sail he prayed, "Lord, send us a prosperous voyage!" But his faith was to be sorely tested. The winds were so contrary that for days they scarcely got out of sight of land. Then storm followed storm. In one tempest the sails were "torn all to tatters! not a dry place was to be found in all the ship. The captain's hammock was half filled with water. . . . All was terror and confusion." The fresh provisions and several barrels of fresh water were swept overboard. After they had been out five weeks, each person was put on a daily allowance of water. On October 30, Whitefield wrote in his Journal: "Our ship's company are now

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brought into great straits. Their allowance of water is a quart a day, and our constant food for some time has been salt beef and water-dumplings, which do not agree with the stomachs of all amongst us." Five days passed: "Our allowance of water is now but a pint a day, so that we dare not eat much beef. Our sails are exceeding thin, and no one knows where we are; but God does, and that is sufficient." Four days later: "Most of us now begin to be weak, and look hollow-eyed. Yet a little while and we shall come to extremity." Another three days and he writes: "An ounce or two of salt beef, a pint of muddy water, and a cake made of flour and the skimmings of the pot, is my daily allowance." But relief was at hand. In less than twenty-four hours the coast of Ireland was sighted. As soon as possible a boat was sent ashore, and presently came back loaded with water and provisions.

Happily, on this return voyage to England very few persons were on board besides the crew. Had there been a large company, the suffering would have been tragic. When it was all over, Whitefield wrote: "The voyage has been greatly for my good; for I have had a glorious opportunity of searching the Scriptures, composing discourses, writing letters, and communing with my own heart. We have been on board just nine weeks and three days. . . . My clothes have not been off (except to change me) all the passage. Part of the time I lay on

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open deck; part on a chest; and the remainder on a bedstead covered with my buffalo skin." He had to content himself with somewhat simple religious services, but the power was there. One day as he was preaching, the captain of the ship was so deeply convicted that he cried out, "Lord, break this hard heart of mine!" Captain Gladman, whose ship had been wrecked on the Florida coast, was on board as a passenger, and was soundly converted. He gave up a seafaring life to devote himself to religious work, and became one of Whitefield's traveling companions. Best of all, the young preacher himself gained a personal experience, a deepening of his faith and trust in God, that enriched his whole after-life.

Immediately on landing he received every kindness. A gentleman on a near-by estate hurried to his relief and provided him with horses for the journey across Ireland. When he reached Limerick, the Protestant Bishop, though an entire stranger, greeted and entertained him with affectionate hospitality. Whitefield preached in the cathedral, and the next day, as he was leaving, "the good Bishop kissed me, and said: 'Mr. Whitefield, God bless you! I wish you success abroad. Had you stayed in town, this house should have been your home.'"

He rode on to Dublin, where he was also treated with every courtesy. Many of the church leaders had heard of him and were deeply interested in the young missionary. Then across to England and

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on to London, where his old-time friends gave him a joyous welcome.

In spite of perils and hardships Whitefield thoroughly enjoyed the ocean. From the time he was at Oxford he was never robust, and during much of his life he was almost constantly on the verge of physical collapse. The change of scene, the sea air and the relaxation did him immense good, and often in his letters, when feeling unusually worn, he expresses his longing for another voyage. Ordinarily, his sea experiences were more commonplace than when he came to America and returned the first time. He made full use of his leisure in study and meditation. He was always gathering new thoughts and illustrations for sermons. For example, he writes in his Journal: "To-day we were entertained with a most agreeable sight. It was a shark about the length of a man, which followed our ship, attended with five little fishes, called the pilot-fish, much like a mackerel but larger. These, I am told, always keep the shark company. And what is most surprising, though the shark is so ravenous a creature, yet let it be never so hungry, it never touches one of them. Nor are they less faithful to him. For, as I was informed, if the shark is hooked, very often these little creatures will not forsake him, but cleave close to his fins, and are often taken up with him. *Go to the Pilot-fish, thou that forsakest a friend in adversity, consider his ways and be ashamed.*"

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He was also an indefatigable correspondent, especially for an age when letter-writing was by no means as common as it is now. On his way to America the second time he wrote more than sixty letters, which were ready for the post when he reached Philadelphia. It was a rather expensive luxury for an itinerant missionary. A mail went from Philadelphia to England once a month. It cost a shilling to send a single sheet, and four shillings to send an ounce.

Reference has already been made to the fact that the longest time Whitefield was ever at sea was eleven weeks, when he made his third visit to America, in 1744. He was now married and his wife was with him. He had planned to leave in June, but at the last minute word came from the captain of the vessel in which he was to embark, that, as Whitefield put it, "he would not take me, for fear of my spoiling his sailors." Evidently, the news was out in maritime circles that whenever Whitefield boarded a ship a revival followed, and it made some captains extremely uneasy. But finally, in August, the evangelist and his wife set sail.

It was a time of great danger. England was at war with France, and as a measure of precaution, one hundred and fifty merchantmen started out together, convoyed by a number of war vessels. In a short time the fleet began to break up, some going in one direction and some in another, while Whitefield, on board the *Wilmington*, and still under

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convoy, made direct for New England. As was his invariable custom, on embarking he had begun holding "regular public prayer morning and evening, frequent communion, and days of humiliation and fasting." All this was within his province, for he was chaplain of the ship, but most chaplains were hopelessly remiss. One day the Wilmington collided with a smaller boat and nearly sank her. "A little while after," writes Whitefield, "we came up with the convoy, and our captain informed them of what had happened. The answer was, 'This is your praying, and be damned to ye!' This, I must own, shocked me more than the striking of the ship."

Again and again the alarm was sounded that the enemy was in sight. On one occasion two ships were seen approaching under full head of canvas, and the captain was sure they were French men-of-war. Whitefield afterward wrote to a friend: "The preparations for an engagement were formidable. Guns mounting, chains put about the masts, everything taken out of the great cabin, hammocks put about the sides of the ship. . . . My wife, after having dressed herself to prepare for all events, set about making cartridges." At first Whitefield went below decks, being told that was the usual place for the chaplain, presumably to help in caring for the wounded. "But not liking my situation, . . . I crept up on deck, and for the first time of my life beat up to arms by a warm exhorta-

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tion." It was a false alarm, however, the ships proving to be friends. But though this danger was escaped, one storm followed another, and the voyage as a whole was one of the most trying Whitefield ever made. The memory of it lingered with him all through life.

CHAPTER VI
A LOVER OF CHILDREN

I hope to grow rich in heaven by taking care of orphans on earth.

It is better to be a saint than a scholar; indeed, the only way to be a true scholar is to be striving to be a true saint.

CHAPTER VI

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ON the ship that brought Whitefield to America the first time were several children belonging to the soldiers' families. The young chaplain became very fond of them and they of him; but he required absolute obedience. One day a little fellow, four years old, refused to say the Lord's Prayer. Such obstinacy would never do. Whitefield forced him to his knees and gave him "several blows," and then, after he had conquered, he rewarded the child with some figs. On another occasion a small boy misbehaved at a public service. The chaplain ordered him to be tied with cords, and required him to learn the penitential wail of David, the fifty-first Psalm, and to recite it before the entire ship's company; and not till then was he unbound.

We might infer from such incidents that the young preacher was unduly severe in his treatment of children, though it is more than likely that his methods would fully have commended themselves to so wise and experienced a disciplinarian as Susannah Wesley. At all events there can be no doubt that he was of an unusually warm and affectionate nature, and we know that children made a peculiar appeal to him. As we shall presently see, all this had a distinct bearing on his entire ministry.

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Of his married life we shall speak more fully later on, but one incident calls for notice in this connection. On February 9, 1744, he wrote: "Who knows what a day may bring forth? Last night I was called to sacrifice my Isaac; I mean, bury my only child and son, about four months old." The father had looked forward to the coming of the baby with eager anticipation; it had been the subject of constant prayer. He fondly hoped and believed that the child would be a boy, that he would grow to manhood and become a preacher. Whitefield was very happy in the thought "of having a son of my own so divinely employed." When the baby was a week old the father "publicly baptized him, and in the company of thousands, solemnly gave him up to that God who gave him to me. A hymn, composed by an aged widow, as suitable to the occasion, was sung, and all went away with big hopes of the child's being hereafter to be employed in the work of God. But how soon have all their expectations been blasted, as well as mine!"

It was a bitter disappointment. But if Whitefield had no one of his own flesh and blood to follow in his steps, he enjoyed the extraordinary privilege of seeing scores, if not hundreds, of spiritual sons, on both sides of the Atlantic, enter the ministry, and many of these grew up from childhood at his very feet.

Wherever he went he was constantly seeking trophies for the Master from among the children.

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One day, on his first visit to Boston, he was preaching to a great congregation. Governor Belcher and many other notables were present. He says, "I think I never was so drawn out to pray for little children, and invite them to Jesus Christ." He had just been told of a child who had heard him preach, and some time afterward had been taken sick and died, and who, as the end came, whispered to his mother, "I will go to Mr. Whitefield's God." "This encouraged me to speak to little ones; but, oh, how were the old people affected, when I said, 'Little children, if your parents will not come to Christ, do you come, and go to heaven without them.' There seemed to be but few dry eyes. I have not seen a greater commotion during my preaching at Boston."

This was not the only time that Whitefield used a child to give added strength to an appeal. On one occasion, as he was holding an open-air service, "a little boy, about eight years of age, wept as though his heart would break. Mr. Cross took him up into the wagon, which so affected me, that I broke from my discourse, and told the people that, since old professors were not concerned, God, out of an infant's mouth, was perfecting praise; and the little boy should preach to them."

Wherever he went Whitefield made an indelible impression on the child-mind. In 1835, when Doctor Stearns became pastor of the Old South Church in Newburyport, beneath whose pulpit Whitefield

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is entombed, he found an aged woman who vividly remembered the great preacher. She used to tell in particular of a Sunday morning when, the gallery being full of children, he suddenly paused in his sermon, and spreading out his hands, beckoned to the boys and girls, and called the "dear little birds to come and fly to the arms of their Saviour." The manner of the appeal, of which only a Whitefield was master, so thrilled his young hearers that they could not forget it to their dying day.

Some of his most beautiful letters were written to children. One of his youthful correspondents lived in Boston, a certain "John D.," and in 1741 Whitefield wrote him from Scotland: "My dear Child, I thank you for your letter. I neither forgot you nor my promise. O that God may effectually work upon your heart betimes, for you cannot be good too soon, or too good. The little orphans at Georgia are crying out, 'What shall we do to be saved?' And I am glad to hear that this is the language of some little ones in New England. If you know any of them, pray give my love to them, and tell them that I pray that Jesus Christ may be revealed in their dear hearts. How did he love the little children, how did he take them up in his sacred arms and bless them! Let this encourage you to come unto him. What comfort will you enjoy! You will then have a heaven upon earth."

Instinctively children were drawn to Whitefield. They soon came to love and to trust him, and noth-

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ing could be more touching than their sympathetic devotion. Very often in his open-air meetings in England, especially in the earlier years, the rabble treated him roughly. At the close of a letter to a friend, describing some experiences through which he had just passed while preaching in Moorfields, London, he adds this: "Several little boys and girls who were fond of sitting round me on the pulpit, while I preached, . . . though they were often pelted with eggs, dirt, etc., thrown at me, never once gave way, but, on the contrary, every time I was struck, turned up their little weeping eyes, and seemed to wish they could receive the blows for me."

We cannot help thinking how different in many ways Whitefield's career might have been but for the apparently simple fact that he was so deeply interested in children. When he crossed the ocean the first time and landed at the village of Savannah, Georgia was not quite six years old. It was the youngest as well as the southernmost of the American colonies. Florida belonged to Spain. When the British government chartered the new colony, the primary thought was to provide a home for unfortunate debtors who had been languishing in English prisons, and who needed a place where they could begin life over again. General Oglethorpe, one of the noblest leaders of his time, accepted the governorship. The first shipload of emigrants arrived in the winter of 1733, and three years later

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John and Charles Wesley landed with the members of the fifth company. John was to be pastor of the little flock and missionary among the neighboring Indians, and Charles was secretary to the governor. Charles remained only eight months, but this was long enough to convince him that something must be done to provide for orphaned children. Already several parents had died, and the number of orphans was sure to increase, while the condition of the homeless waifs was pitiful in the extreme.

When he returned to England late in the year, and described the situation to Whitefield, the heart of that lover of children was deeply stirred, and he resolved that if he ever got to America, one of his first concerns should be to start an orphanage. As we have already seen, he was delayed in sailing, and did not reach Savannah on his first voyage till May 7, 1738. It was a hurried trip; in four months he was on his way back to England, being anxious to receive his final ordination to the priesthood. But what he saw during those few weeks gave a mighty impetus to his plans.

From this time to the end of his life no enterprise appealed to him as did his orphan work in Georgia. He dreamed of it by night and toiled for it by day. His journals and letters are crowded with references to it. Wherever he went, in England and Scotland, and along the Atlantic seaboard in America, he was constantly presenting the claims of his little wards and soliciting gifts to provide for

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their needs. His frequent visits to Philadelphia, New York, and Boston were in part prompted by his desire for help, and he was rarely disappointed. More than one voyage across the Atlantic was made largely for the sake of the orphans. Indeed, it is not too much to say that his ministry, especially as it was related to America, was in considerable measure shaped by his absorbed interest in the homeless boys and girls whom he gathered under his protecting care in the Georgia colony.

No sooner did he reach England after his first visit to America than he began appealing in public and private for the project so near his heart. By the middle of the summer of 1739 he had collected more than a thousand pounds, and he was eager to get back to Savannah and start the new enterprise. So widespread was the interest awakened that, as he tells us, "Multitudes offered to go with me," but he took only a few selected helpers.

In forming his plans he was strongly influenced by the accounts he received of the great orphanage which Professor Francke had founded at Halle, in Germany, where two thousand children were cared for, and whose fame as a model institution was world wide. To plant something of this kind on American soil, however modest the beginning, was the ambition of his heart. Five hundred acres were granted him a few miles out of Savannah, and there on a March day, in the spring of 1740, while the workmen knelt around him in prayer, he laid the

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first bricks of the new building. "I called it Bethesda, because I hoped it would be a house of mercy to many souls."

The rules which he laid down for the management of the place are interesting, not only because they were prepared by Whitefield, but as showing the ideas that most good people used to hold as to the proper way to bring up children. The orphans were wakened every morning at five o'clock. As soon as they slipped on their clothes, each one spent a quarter of an hour in private prayer. Then they all gathered in the chapel and sang a psalm and listened to an exposition of the Scriptures. At seven Ken's morning hymn was sung and a prayer offered. After that the hungry children sat down to breakfast, but the meal was interrupted at various stages for the singing of more hymns. From eight to ten, while the girls were busy with spinning and sewing, the boys drew water and chopped wood, and some of the more promising ones were "placed under tailors, shoemakers, or carpenters." At ten school began, when they were taught to read and write. Dinner was at noon, "and between that and two o'clock, everyone was employed in something useful, but *no time* was allowed for *idleness or play*, which are *Satan's darling hours to tempt children to all manner of wickedness*, as lying, cursing, swearing, and uncleanness; so that, though we are about seventy in family, we have no more noise than if it was a private house." From two to six

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was given to school work. In the evening there was another religious service, and a closing period of private prayer.

Verily times change. What child in these days could be induced to submit to such a program as this? And yet the Georgia orphans were perfectly contented, and whatever criticism may have been leveled at the work, not a voice on either side of the Atlantic condemned the strictness of the rules.

From the start it was Whitefield's earnest hope that the orphanage might be more than a mere haven for homeless children. He expected to see it expand into an educational center. The colony was new and schools were almost unknown. Why should not Bethesda become a fountain-head of Christian instruction for all the southland? And then Whitefield had a still fonder dream, that this institution, founded in prayer, should prove a nursery for the Christian ministry. He hoped, as the years went by, to gather groups of boys who should grow up, at least in part, under his own influence and supervision, who should be taught the deeper things of the spiritual life, and trained to go out as preachers of a full gospel.

No wonder that with these visions before him he sought with peculiar earnestness to bring the children to Christ. Some of his happiest evangelistic work was done at Bethesda. Scarcely had he begun when we find him writing to friends in London: "O what wonderful things is God doing in

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America! . . . My little orphans now begin to feel the love of Jesus Christ. When we came to church the power of the Lord came upon all. Most of the children, both boys and girls, cried bitterly. The congregation was drowned in tears. When I came home I went to prayer again. It would have charmed your heart to have heard the little ones, in different parts of the house, begging Jesus to take full possession of their hearts."

Wherever he journeyed, by land or sea, the orphans were constantly in his mind, and from the midst of his crowded life he took time to correspond with them. To many of them he was their closest earthly friend, and their reverent love for him was as touching as it was genuine. He frequently read to English and Scotch audiences letters he had just received from the children, and many a time the people were melted to tears, and numbers were converted as they listened to these simple experiences from beyond the sea. Whitefield's letters to the orphans were written in a perfectly familiar style. He knew his young wards by name—"Dear Betty," "Dear Molly," "Dear James," "Dear John"—and so on down the long roll. His messages were always an appeal to get close to the Master, as when he wrote: "Dear Bekky, and is the Lord still striving with you? O then admire his patience, and give him your whole heart. I had no other end in bringing you to Bethesda, but that you might be brought to Jesus. . . . What sweet

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opportunities do you enjoy! How freely may you go into the woods and pour out your heart before the dear Jesus. How early was Samuel acquainted with the Lord, and why should not you be acquainted with him? . . . Come then, my dear Lamb, and wander no longer. Away to him just as you are, and when you are near to God, forget not your affectionate friend, George Whitefield."

During the thirty years and more in which Whitefield lived to watch the progress of the work, hundreds of children enjoyed the blessed influence of the orphanage, and were trained for happy and useful lives. A number of the boys entered the ministry. And yet, in spite of all the time and prayer and toil that he devoted to it, in spite of the fact that he impoverished himself by giving more than two thousand pounds of his own money, the enterprise never quite fulfilled the high hopes of the founder. Its location in the extreme south, away from the centers of population, together with other circumstances, militated against a large and permanent success.

The indirect results were much more significant than the direct. The institution was unutterably dear to Whitefield, the very apple of his eye, and again and again it was this that lured him to America. Seeking funds for its support brought him into close touch with multitudes of leading men and women on both sides of the Atlantic, while on numberless occasions his sermons gained a peculiar and

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persuasive power as he told of his orphans and appealed for help.

And, still more important, Whitefield could never forget the humble home where he was born, and how he struggled for an education; and it gave him a tender sympathy for poor children, especially those who, like himself, had no father to encourage and help them. In the background of all his pleading for others was the vivid recollection of his own early experience. Think of this man, the most eloquent preacher of the age, evangelist on two continents, year after year, through a whole generation, going up and down the lands, holding before the multitude this picture of the suppliant orphans! He wrought better than he knew. It was a small thing that help should be found for Georgia, but how much it meant, in a day when philanthropies were few and social service was almost unknown, that men everywhere should be aroused, and that the mind and heart of the English-speaking world should be turned to the needs and claims of neglected childhood. It is no exaggeration to say that the immense interest which to-day is felt in every phase of child welfare, the numberless institutions for the protection and training of children, and especially the tender concern for the little waifs without home and parents, may be traced in no small part to the new spirit awakened by that royal lover of children, George Whitefield.

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After the death of Whitefield, in 1770, Bethesda met with a succession of disasters. The management fell into wretched hands, and the work sadly deteriorated. Fire broke out one night and nearly consumed the main building. It was partially restored, only to be completely ruined by fire and hurricane. For years everything was abandoned, and even the foundations of the old orphanage were plowed up. But the name "Bethesda" clung to the original site. In 1870, under entirely changed auspices, a new building for the care of children was erected, and it is gratifying to know that the present-day orphanage is on the spot so dear to Whitefield, that it is known as "Bethesda," and that, with its one hundred boys, it is in a flourishing condition.

CHAPTER VII
THE VOICE OF A PROPHET

When a soul is turned to God, every day is a Sabbath, every meal is a spiritual refreshment, and every sentence he speaks should be a sermon. Whether he stays abroad or at home, whether he is on the Exchange or locked up in a closet, he can say, "O God, thou art my God!"

Some more coronets are likely to be laid at the Redeemer's feet. They glitter gloriously when set in, and surrounded with a crown of thorns.

CHAPTER VII

THE VOICE OF A PROPHET

AN unfailing feature of religious crises is the appearance of prophets. This has been true from early Hebrew times down through all the centuries. Two hundred years ago England was well supplied with preachers, but among them there was no outstanding prophet; for while prophets are preachers, preachers are not always prophets.

If ever the prophetic spirit was needed, it was in the gloom preceding the great Evangelical Revival. Reference has been made to the spiritual apathy of the age. To be sure, many of the clergy and of the laity led lives that were morally correct, and were everywhere regarded as exemplary Christians, but they were held in the grip of the chill formalism which was abroad in the land. No word in the current vocabulary struck deeper dismay to men's hearts than "enthusiasm." From pulpit and press, church leaders were constantly inveighing against it. To betray such a spirit in religious work, or to permit one's own experience to become tainted with it, was a most serious offense. Heresy, deadness, enthusiasm—all might be bad, but the worst of these was enthusiasm. Calm self-

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restraint, stiff compliance with conventional ways, alone could be tolerated.

Some of the commonest truths of Christianity had been well-nigh forgotten. Even distinguished prelates had no conception of the meaning of the New Birth or justification by faith. So eminent a leader as Bishop Butler failed to understand how a human soul could enjoy the immediate personal guidance of the Divine Spirit. One day he hotly exclaimed, "Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Spirit is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing!" And he would not tolerate it among his clergy.

For the most part, the pulpits of the land were occupied by men with little or no religious experience, men whose principal identification was their clerical garb. There was no moral tonic in the preaching. The pulpit was cowardly. On the great sins of the times, such as dueling, drink, gambling and slavery, the voice of the clergy was practically silent. The typical sermon of the day was a cold, unfeeling essay, with perhaps a religious squint, perhaps not. Even so worthy a man as the Reverend Samuel Wesley, father of John, tolerated a curate at the Epworth Church whose favorite topic in the pulpit was the duty of making one's will. In most churches a burning, soul-gripping message on some great spiritual theme would not only have startled the hearers, it would have scandalized the more sober-minded. There was but

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scant sympathy in those days with the fervent cry of the sainted Baxter:

“I preached, as never sure to preach again;
And as a dying man to dying men.”

The quite general belief that the New Birth accompanied baptism, and that nothing further was to be expected or desired, rested like a dead hand on spiritual aspiration. The application of the water was enough; henceforth little was to be feared for this life or the life to come.

In the midst of this darkness and stagnation began the new movement in which Whitefield played so large a part. We think of him as a preacher, as the orator with a matchless voice; but back of the voice was the soul, and greater than the orator was the message. Those eloquent lips have been sealed for many a decade, but the truths they uttered will vibrate to the end of time. No doubt the crowds were charmed and swayed by the wonderful delivery, but this alone would never have held them or brought them together again and again. They may not have known it, but a prophet was in their midst. Whitefield had caught a heavenly vision, and he was not disobedient to that vision.

His doctrinal teaching was simple but fundamental. He was in no sense a systematic theologian; his mind was not built that way. Now and then ideas crept into his thinking which were inaccurate, and the phrasing was sometimes crude. But

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at heart he was absolutely loyal to the old-time faith. The dread reality of sin and the beatific reality of salvation, the pathetic helplessness and the dire need of man and the all-sufficiency of the divine Saviour, the barrenness of a Christless life and the joy and duty of Christlike living—these primitive truths were the very soul of his preaching, from the first sermon to the last.

Behind the words was his own experience; he had the Pauline assurance, "I know!" There was the fadeless memory of an hour in the old Oxford days when a wonderful light burst upon him, and he knew he was born again. He had heard the divine call, and with glowing conviction he could say:

"Christ, the Son of God, hath sent me o'er the widespread
lands;

Mine the mighty ordination of the piercèd hands!"

When he spoke, it was not a mere sermon, it was a heavenly message. There was no spiritual arrogance in his heartfelt belief that God was speaking through him. If he was not a foreteller, he was something better. He possessed the highest gift of the ancient prophets—he was a *forth-teller*, and, like them, he dared to say, "Thus saith the Lord!"

John Wesley was once asked why he spoke so often from the words, "Ye must be born again." He quietly replied, "Because ye *must* be born again!" Whitefield was of the same mind, and this mighty truth, together with justification by faith,

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formed the burden of his preaching. The second sermon he ever prepared, and the first to be published, was on "The New Birth," and so great was the interest awakened that three printings were called for within a few months. Years afterward, referring to this sermon, he said: "I remember when I began to speak against baptismal regeneration, . . . the first quarrel many had with me was because I did not say that all people who were baptized were born again. I would as soon believe the doctrine of transubstantiation."

He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," that forms and ceremonies, however solemn and beautiful, are powerless to save; that even the highest morality is inadequate. There must be the transforming touch of a Divine Hand. Such preaching to-day sounds almost hackneyed; in Whitefield's time it was positively startling. No clearer evidence could be found of the sweeping change which has been wrought in men's religious thinking during the past two centuries than the fact that many of the sermons by Whitefield and the Wesleys which produced overwhelming effects, if preached now, would awaken very little comment. Nor is there a finer tribute than this to the deep and genuine results wrought by the Evangelical Revival.

Whitefield never wavered, either in the matter or in the intensity of his message. Most of the clergy, from the country curate to the bishop on his throne,

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stormed and raved at him, and many of the laymen were as angry as the priests. The new prophet was turned out of the churches and all manner of ecclesiastical preferments were denied him. The press flayed him unmercifully. Yet none of these things moved him. And as time went on it became increasingly evident that this message was the very thing that multitudes not only needed but were really hungry for. People everywhere were suffering the pangs of spiritual famine, though most of them were ignorant of the cause of their trouble. But they knew something was lacking and they instinctively felt that here was a man who could help them. In no other way can we explain the surging of the crowds to his ministry. They clung to him; he was rarely alone. While he was still a young fellow in the early twenties, in noticing one of his preaching tours, a newspaper casually remarked that "he was attended . . . by sixty or seventy horse, so great was the love of the people to his person, and to his doctrine of the New Birth."

In later years one of the shrewdest observers of Whitefield's work and of the whole Evangelical Movement, was George III. As is well known, Charles Wesley, Jr., son of the great hymn-writer, was a musical prodigy. He often played before the royal family and was on intimate terms with the King. Once, when they were together, after his Majesty had lost his sight, he said, "Mr. Wesley, is there anybody in the room besides you and me?"

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“No, your Majesty.”

“Then I will tell you what I think. It is my judgment that your good father, your Uncle John, George Whitefield, and Lady Huntingdon have done more to promote true religion in England than all the dignified clergy put together.”

The old king was obtuse on some subjects, but he was keen enough to know that there were prophets in the land.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BRITISH ISLES FOR CHRIST

God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them.

I am never better than when I am on the full stretch for God.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BRITISH ISLES FOR CHRIST

FOR a year and more, prior to his first visit to America, Whitefield's popularity in England was enormous. He was eagerly welcomed to pulpits great and small, and wherever he preached churches were packed to the doors. Nothing like it had ever been seen, and the young man was commonly referred to as "Ye wonder of ye age." But at the very time when the people were shouting his praises the clouds were beginning to gather, and distant rumbling was heard, ominous if not loud. When he set sail, many supposed he was gone for good, and they gave a sigh of relief. What was their dismay, less than a year later, to find him back again, bold and aggressive as ever. But a change had come. He was no longer greeted with shouts. Everywhere churches were closed to him. At first three or four clergymen in London ventured to invite him into their pulpits, but soon every door was shut. Bristol, the second city in England, had witnessed some of his greatest triumphs. But now the chancellor plainly told him that if he dared to preach anywhere in the diocese, he would be excommunicated.

Why this revulsion of feeling? Perhaps some of the clergy were jealous of Whitefield's success.

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Doubtless many more were offended that this young "upstart" should presume to cast doubt on the well-established and most comfortable doctrine that water-baptism alone is needed to effect the New Birth. Such disturbing talk was not to be tolerated. And in other ways Whitefield was not quite churchly, which all added to the general vexation. Moreover, he kept a Journal of the voyage to Savannah, which he sent back to some friends in England for their private perusal, and which, unfortunately, they published. It had a wide circulation, and while harmless among the select few, it contained comments and allusions respecting himself and others never intended for the public eye, and which put the writer in a false light.

In a word, Whitefield was an outcast. What should he do? He might go back to America, where his Savannah parish would gladly receive him; and he was now fully equipped, having been ordained to the priesthood. But, aside from the imperative need for collecting money in England for the orphan enterprise in Georgia, he longed to spend a part of his ministry in evangelizing his native land.

PREACHING IN THE FIELDS

God moves in a mysterious way. It was the month of February, 1739. Whitefield had gone up from London to Bristol only to find every church door shut in his face. Then he turned to the

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city prison. He would surely be free to preach there! But in a few days even this privilege was denied him. Only one opening remained. Should he make the venture? For a moment he hesitated, from no fear of the snows and bleak winds of mid-winter, but, would he be doing right, a priest of the Church of England, to risk such an unheard-of thing? He would! And forward he went with the swing of a mighty urge.

Just out of Bristol was Kingswood Hill with its coal mines and the thousands of begrimed and neglected colliers. Here the break was made. "I went upon a mount and spake to as many people as came unto me. They were upwards of two hundred. Blessed be God that I have now broken the ice! I believe I was never more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to teach those hearers in the open fields."

In these days, how commonplace it seems! And yet this was the beginning of that marvelous open-air ministry of Whitefield and the Wesleys and their followers, which, in carrying the gospel to vast numbers of the un-churched, did more than anything else to shatter the cold formalism of the day and to turn the religious world upside down. Whitefield started with two hundred, but soon the Kingswood crowds had leaped to ten thousand; it was no longer a venture. To be sure, it made a sensation—a regular clergyman, in gown and cassock, preaching under the open sky, and using, in-

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stead of the liturgy, extemporaneous prayer! And when they heard of it, many were scandalized; but God was in it. Picture Whitefield with his surpassing voice, a delivery that lifted hearers out of themselves, and a message that shook the nation; think of restricting such a man to the four walls of a parish church! As absurd as attempting to confine a lion in a bird-cage! Here was a prophet, and he must have the freedom of a prophet. The young Elijah was now in his element; "Field preaching is my plan, in this I am carried on eagle's wings." It became a life-motto with him: "Mounts are the best pulpits and the heavens the best sounding-boards."

John Wesley was in London at the time. By temperament and training he was a stricter churchman than Whitefield, and when the news reached him he was startled. "I could scarcely reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields; . . . having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church." But he soon yielded and began for himself. Whitefield was delighted. "I went to bed," says he, "rejoicing that a fresh inroad was made into Satan's territories, by Mr. Wesley's following me in field-preaching. . . . The Lord give him ten thousand times more success than he has given me!"

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Of the period from 1735, when Whitefield began to preach, till his death in 1770, approximately two years were spent at sea, nine years in America, and twenty-four years in Britain. Both at home and abroad he was an evangelist at large. Too restless to settle down in one place, he must constantly be on the move. Of course, such a roaming career was opposed to all church order, and Bishop Benson, who had ordained him, admonished him that it must cease. But the young man made a spirited defense of his course. He believed God wanted him to be just what he called himself, a "gospel rover," and, bishop or no bishop, he would not yield.

Unlike the methodical Wesley, whose elaborate itineraries were planned and executed with military precision, Whitefield followed the leading of the hour. With but little to do in organizing societies and directing followers, he was simply a preacher of the Word. As doors opened and calls came, it was the voice of God to him, and at once he went forward.

It was in this spirit that he turned to the open fields. Here was his grandest opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic, and he made full use of it. His favorite scenes of action were near London. On the edge of the city lay the great open tract known as Moorfields. Formerly a swamp, it had been drained and otherwise improved, and now was a rallying ground for the rabble, who poured out there by tens of thousands. Wrestlers, boxers,

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mountebanks—every sort of show, decent and indecent, all found their way to Moorfields. The place was a stronghold of Satan, and just where Whitefield longed to meet the enemy. Friends urged him not to risk it; they warned him he would never come out alive, and he himself admitted it was “a mad trick.” But he did it, and kept it up.

He had no fixed time for preaching; any hour would do, so long as he had a crowd. Once he began at six in the morning, and soon thousands were packed around him. He was always prepared for rough treatment, and he rarely escaped. It was an everyday experience of which he wrote: “I was honored with having stones, dirt, rotten eggs, and pieces of dead cats thrown at me.” A portable pulpit had been constructed for him, which could be quickly taken apart and carried from place to place. It stood on stilts, and at best was unstable. Sometimes the mob would make a rush and try to throw pulpit, preacher, and his circle of friends, all in a heap. More than once Whitefield’s life was really imperiled. “As I was passing from the pulpit to the coach, I felt my hat and my wig to be almost off. I turned about, and observed a sword just touching my temples. A young rake was determined to stab me, but a gentleman, seeing the sword thrust near me, struck it up with his cane, and so the destined victim escaped.” But, as a rule, the people were good-natured, and the opposition, though annoying, and at times malignant,

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was, after all, a mere incident in the mighty work.

Here were vast multitudes, now and then a sprinkling of the gentry in coaches or on horseback, drawn largely by curiosity, but the great mass of them from the very dregs of London's population, the "devil's castaways," who rarely if ever darkened a church door, and who were now hearing about One who to most was an "unknown God."

What throngs! not only at Moorfields, but at Kennington Common, at Marylebone Fields, and wherever Whitefield preached in the open. Here are a few snatches from his Journal, describing some of his earlier experiences: "Preached this Sunday morning in Moorfields, to about twenty thousand people; . . . and, at six, preached at Kennington. Such a sight I never saw before. I believe there were no less than fifty thousand people, near fourscore coaches, besides great numbers of horses. There was an awful silence among the people. God gave me great enlargement of heart. I continued my discourse an hour and a half." "Preached at Kennington Common. God sent us a little rain, but that only washed away the curious hearers. Nearly thirty thousand stood their ground." "Preached at a place called Mayfair, near Hyde Park Corner. The congregation, I believe, consisted of near eighty thousand people; it was by far the largest I ever preached to yet. In the time of my prayer, there was a little noise; but

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they kept a deep silence during my whole discourse. . . . God strengthened me to speak so loud that most could hear, and so powerfully, that most, I believe, could feel."

Whitefield made large use of singing. Needless to say, the "gospel" variety was unknown in those days. Indeed, until the Wesleyan song movement got under way, there were not many hymns apart from the Psalms. But the preacher did his best and the crowd followed suit, and so vociferously that when conditions were favorable the sound carried two miles. Singing proved especially effective when the people were restless, or when disturbers tried to break up a meeting. Let no one imagine that this open-air work was easy; it taxed Whitefield to the limit. Picture a crowd—tens of thousands, the "scum o' the earth"; and no police restraint; some of them openly bent on mischief; others friendly, but the bulk of them of uncertain temper, swayed by a passing breeze. It was a familiar experience that Whitefield alluded to, when, at the close of one of these meetings, he wrote to a friend: "I continued in praying, preaching, and singing (for the noise at times, was too great to preach) about three hours." Hard work, but glorious! Whitefield exulted in it. He used to say: "I think every day lost that is not spent in field-preaching." Nowhere was he so completely in his element. He was a born master of crowds, and they felt it. Rarely did they escape him.

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As time passed, his hearers were singularly drawn to him, and wherever he went multitudes became his staunch friends. Just before he sailed the second time for America we find this entry in his Journal: "Preached in the evening to near twenty thousand, at Kennington Common. . . . Could scarcely get to the coach for the people thronging me, to take me by the hand and give me a parting blessing."

An important part of these meetings, decidedly novel in those times, was the collection. Day and night the Georgia orphanage was on Whitefield's heart, and next to saving souls he was bent on finding a support for his little wards. Rarely did he preach without bringing in an appeal for the children, and never lived the man who could appeal more persuasively than he. The results were astonishing. This is a single day's experience, taken almost at random: "Preached this morning to a prodigious number of people in Moorfields, and collected for the orphans £52 19s. 6d., above £20 of which was in halfpence. Indeed, they almost wearied me in receiving their mites, and they were more than one man could carry home." No wonder! Ten thousand copper halfpennies, besides all the larger coins; and remember that the value of money then was several times what it is now. But this was not all. That same day he "preached in the evening to near sixty thousand people. . . . After sermon I made another collection of £29 17s.

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8d.," a total of nearly £83, worth at least \$2,000 in these days, and a great part of it coming from the dregs of society.

While open-air preaching, on a large scale, centered in London, Whitefield carried it on to the limit of his strength, in all parts of the kingdom. Throughout the land he had his favorite preaching-places, pieces of rising ground where he could easily speak to multitudes; and for long years after his death many of these places were associated with his name and were known as "Whitefield's Mounts."

TABERNACLE AND CHAPEL

The results of this work were blessed and oft-times immediate. Whitefield used to invite those who wished to begin a new life to write a brief note and pass it up to him, and at the close of one of the huge London meetings, held in the spring of 1742, he wrote to a friend: "We then retired to the Tabernacle. My pocket was full of notes from persons brought under concern. I read them amid the praises . . . of thousands. . . . This was the beginning of the Tabernacle Society. Three hundred and fifty awakened souls were received in one day; and, I believe the number of notes exceeded a thousand."

The Tabernacle of which he speaks was a large frame shed, recently erected by some of his friends on the edge of Moorfields, as a protection for his



TOTTENHAM COURT CHAPEL, LONDON

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more regular hearers in cold and rainy weather. The original intention was to keep it there for only a short time, until Whitefield returned to America; but it continued in use for several years, when it gave place to a brick building on the same spot, and this stood for more than a century, the center of an important evangelistic work.

For a considerable time Whitefield had wanted a meeting-place in the more fashionable West End of London. There were many people of social quality who had heard him on some chance occasion, and who were eager to hear him frequently, and for whom he certainly had a message; but they were not attracted either to the open-air meetings or to the barnlike Tabernacle. His hopes were realized when, in 1756, a chapel was erected in Tottenham Court Road. It was of dignified appearance, with a dome rising to a height of one hundred fourteen feet. Beneath it was a vault where Whitefield expected to be buried, and where he hoped John and Charles Wesley would lie beside him. The chapel was spacious, but when Whitefield was the preacher the building could not begin to hold the crowds, and among the multitude that came with more or less regularity were many of the élite of London.

In comparison with the humble Tabernacle it was quite an aristocratic center. But let no one suppose that the preacher's message was altered one iota to suit the ears of his more fashionable hear-

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ers. Never were the dread reality of sin and the need of a new birth declared with more burning intensity. With the preaching of every sermon definite results were expected. "God is doing wonders in the new Chapel," wrote Whitefield, a few months after the opening. "A neighboring doctor has baptized the place, calling it 'Whitefield's Soul-Trap.' I pray that it may be a soul-trap indeed, to many wandering sinners."

As a priest in the Church of England, Whitefield wanted the Chapel to be a part of the Establishment, but certain narrow requirements in force at the time prevented; and in order to give the work legal standing, the place was licensed as a Dissenting Meetinghouse. When Whitefield was in town he himself was usually the preacher, but during his long absences picked laymen filled the pulpit, and they did so with considerable success. The prayer of the great leader was answered to the full. How many thousands have been converted on that spot God only knows. After a history of one hundred and thirty-three years the original building was torn down in 1889 to make way for the larger and up-to-date plant which occupies the same site, and which is one of the most distinguished centers of Nonconformist activity in England. Organized along institutional lines, it is ministering to a teeming population in that part of London. Under the leadership of the late C. Silvester Horne, "Old Whitefield," as it is familiarly called, gained an in-

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ternational fame; and it is gratifying to know that never more than in recent years has it been what the founder prayed it might be—a “soul-trap.”

EXPERIENCES AS AN ITINERANT

Whitefield loved London, and unless out of the country, he usually spent a part, if not the whole, of each winter there. He had the Tabernacle, and later the Chapel, and in favorable weather he could preach in the fields. But through life he held to an early resolve not to “nestle” in London. He dreaded entering “winter quarters,” and he always longed for the spring, when once again he could begin ranging up and down the land. He was glad to preach anywhere, in private homes, rich or poor, in barns, in church or chapel, and especially under the open sky.

He was a prodigious worker. We find him in midwinter, preaching nineteen times in four days, twelve of the services being in the open. In a space of thirty-six hours he preached five times, “expounded” four times, and attended a love-feast that held on till four in the morning. A letter written in the spring of 1743 gives us a glimpse of his activities: Following a very heavy Sunday, “it was past one in the morning before I could lay my weary body down.” But he was up at five, hurrying on horseback to the place where he preached at seven. “At ten I read prayers and preached in

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Stenhouse Church," and administered the Lord's Supper. "Then I rode to Stroud, where I was enabled to preach to about twelve thousand. . . . About six in the evening I preached to about the like number on Hampton Common. . . . After this I went to Hampton and held a general love-feast. . . . I went to bed about midnight, very cheerful and very happy." At daylight the next morning he was at it again.

Remember that Whitefield's sermons often extended to an hour and well beyond, and that he threw into every message all the passionate earnestness of his soul. No wonder that as the years passed he became so worn that his pace slackened. During the closing decade of his life there were considerable periods when he was able to preach very little, or none at all.

In comparison with Wesley, Whitefield was not often imperiled by mob violence. He used to say of himself that he had "very little natural courage." And yet he was far from being a coward, and more than once he stood his ground against assaults that would have terrified most men. As he journeyed from place to place, his experiences, if not always thrilling, at least were interesting. In those days the main roads were infested with bandits, and travelers were liable to be held up at any time. "In one of his journeys Whitefield was told of a widow with a large family, whose landlord had distrained her furniture, and was about to sell it, unless her

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rent was paid. Whitefield's purse was never large, but his sympathy was great, and he immediately gave the five guineas which the helpless woman needed. The friend who was traveling with him hinted that the sum was more than he could reasonably afford, to which the gushing, if not perfectly accurate, reply was, 'When God brings a case of distress before us, it is that we may relieve it.' The two travelers proceeded on their journey, and before long encountered a highwayman, who demanded their money, which they gave. Whitefield now turned the tables on his friend, and reminded him how much better it was for the poor widow to have the five guineas than the thief who had just robbed them. They had not long resumed their travel before the man returned and demanded Whitefield's coat, which was more respectable than his own. This request was also granted, Whitefield accepting the robber's ragged habiliments till he could procure a better. Presently they perceived the marauder again galloping toward them most furiously; and now, fearing that their lives were threatened, they also spurred their horses, and, fortunately, arrived at some cottages, before the highwayman could stop them. The thief was balked, and, no doubt, was immensely mortified; for when Whitefield took off the man's tattered coat, he found, in one of its pockets, a carefully wrapped parcel containing one hundred guineas." Thus the astonished preacher suddenly became pos-

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essor of the proceeds of sundry highway robberies!¹

IN SCOTLAND, WALES, AND IRELAND

John Wesley, with his stanch Arminianism, never made the impression in Scotland that he did south of the Tweed. But Whitefield, who was a Calvinist, fared better. All told, he journeyed to the north fourteen times, his first visit being in the summer of 1741. Presbyterianism was the established faith in Scotland, but there, as in England, genuine religion was almost dead. Quite recently a group of earnest clergymen of evangelical spirit had withdrawn from the old Kirk and had formed "The Associate Presbytery." In many ways they were akin to the Oxford Methodists, and when Whitefield heard of them, at once there was awakened in him a fellow feeling. He corresponded with them, and presently they invited him to make them a visit. He went with high hopes, but soon found himself in a disagreeable situation. The Seceders were extremely narrow. They demanded that their visitor preach exclusively for them and wholly ignore the old Kirk. But while in a general way Whitefield's sympathies were with the new party, he refused to be drawn into their controversy, and insisted that he be left free to associate with any company of Christians, and to fill any

¹ This story originally appeared in *The Gospel Magazine*, 1816, and is told by Tyerman, I: 525.

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pulpit to which he was invited; and to this purpose he held firmly till his return to England in October.

The following June he was back for a second visit, and he heard with joy that all Scotland was stirring with a new life. At once he threw himself into evangelistic work, chiefly with the members of the Established Kirk, for the other party had grown very cool. A few weeks passed and then the storm broke. The Seceders could contain themselves no longer, and they turned upon Whitefield with strange fierceness. He was publicly denounced as "an abjured, prelatic hireling," "a limb of antichrist; a boar and a wild beast." When he preached in the fields or for the enemy, and souls were converted, it was anathematized as the work of the devil; and a day of fasting was appointed that they might implore divine forgiveness for having once invited such a son of Beelzebub to visit them. When Whitefield heard of it, he cried: "To what length may prejudice carry even good men? From giving way to the first risings of bigotry and party spirit, good Lord deliver us!"

But the opposition did not seriously disturb him. The work went right on, and as the years passed the Seceders grew more lenient. At every subsequent visit Whitefield's grip on the Scottish people was strengthened. They came not only to honor but to love him, so that, in 1768, when he was there for what proved to be the last time, he exclaimed, "I am here only in danger of being hugged to

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death." Multitudes were awakened, and among them many young men who entered the ministry. It is doubtful if anyone not native to the soil ever preached in Scotland whose influence was as deep and abiding as that of George Whitefield. He had much to do with reshaping the religious life of the country and in giving to it the strong evangelical tone which it retains to the present day.

Whitefield was also very fond of Wales. He made frequent tours through the Principality, and wherever he went, with few exceptions, he was received with high honor. Though not the founder of the Calvinistic Methodists, he was for a number of years their moderator, and to the end of his life he was a trusted friend and counselor. Wales owes an untold debt of gratitude to the great evangelist.

There was something about Ireland that appealed to John Wesley. He went there no less than twenty times, establishing an important work, and his name is associated with every part of the island. But it was otherwise with Whitefield. He visited Ireland only twice, and although he received a warm welcome and had his usual success in preaching, both visits were comparatively brief.

While he was there the second time, in 1757, he had an experience he could never forget. One Sunday afternoon he preached to a great crowd on a green near Dublin. Starting to leave at the close, he was suddenly set on by a mob that seemed

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determined to end his work for all time. During the service he had been attended by a soldier and several preachers, but at the first sign of real danger they fled for their lives, leaving Whitefield to get on as best he could. "Vollies of hard stones," he tells us, "came from all quarters, and every step I took a fresh stone struck, and made me reel backward and forward, till I was almost breathless, and was covered all over with blood." One large stone hit him in the temple and he fully expected to be killed but by a happy providence finally escaped. Years later, a stranger called on him one day in London, and when Whitefield learned he was an Irishman, he took off his cap, and bending toward him placed his hand on a deep scar in his head, saying, "Sir, this wound I got in your country for preaching Christ."

AMONG THE NOBILITY

It is a singular fact that although John Wesley was born in the choicest of circles, and all through childhood and youth enjoyed a social environment far beyond anything that George Whitefield knew, he seems never to have felt thoroughly at home in what might be called high society. It is needless to say that whenever entertained in the palaces of the great, he carried himself with distinguished propriety; but his happiest hours were not spent there, nor did he very often preach to such classes. In his Journal, more than once we find a comment

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like this: "I was a little out of my element among lords and ladies. I love plain company best."

Whitefield, on the other hand, was nowhere at greater ease than among the nobility. In 1739, or earlier, he had the rare good fortune to become acquainted with the Countess of Huntingdon, one of the most remarkable women of her age, and his whole after-life was profoundly influenced by her friendship for him. The Countess was of royal descent; she was held in high esteem by King George III, and moved freely in court circles. Still more unusual and significant, she was deeply religious, from the first intensely interested in the Methodist movement, and all through the years courageously open in letting the world know where her sympathies lay. Whitefield had not been long in the ministry when she heard of him and became impressed with his divine call, and she urged Bishop Benson to ordain him to the priesthood. The bishop yielded; but some time after, annoyed over the young man's irregularities, he expressed to the Countess bitter regret at having done so. With great spirit she replied, "My lord, mark my words—when you come upon your dying bed, that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with complacency!" It is interesting to know that when the bishop lay dying he sent ten guineas to Whitefield, as a token of his favor, and begged to be remembered by him in his prayers.

Several years later the Countess made White-

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field her domestic chaplain, and through her he was introduced to many of the nobility. While recognizing the vast work to be done among the poor and outcast, he soon came to feel that he had an equally important mission to those who dwelt in mansions, and whose souls were famished for God. In palatial homes, in both Scotland and England, and especially in the drawing room of the Countess, he preached scores of times before the most brilliant companies. Many pages might be filled with the names of the lords and ladies who hung spell-bound upon his words: the élite of the realm, leaders in court circles, those eminent in affairs of state and in art and literature. A social nonentity, not a drop of blue blood in his veins, yet no other preacher in England had such a hearing; and some of his most notable spiritual triumphs were won where we should least expect them.

Needless to say that the same gospel which he preached in the field he declared in the palace. One day his aristocratic hearers were amazed at his affirming that Jesus was so glad to receive sinners that he welcomed even "the devil's castaways." "Absurd! Impossible!" they exclaimed to each other at the close of the service, after the speaker had retired from the room. Being told of their comments, Whitefield hurried back and proved to them from his own observation that this very marvel was happening day after day.

Throughout his ministry Whitefield carried on

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an extensive correspondence with both men and women of the titled class. His letters, simple and straightforward, show his burning eagerness to touch the hearts and lives of his aristocratic friends. It is midnight, after a day of toil, but he will not go to rest till he has written a message to "Lord L.—": "I hope Jesus is now passing by you, and saying unto you, 'Live!' O that the stone of infidelity, which before lay at the door of your heart may be now rolled away! . . . My Lord, if you could be brought once to love secret prayer, and to converse feelingly with God in his word, your heaven will begin on earth. . . . As for praying in your family, I intreat you, my Lord, not to neglect it. Apply to Christ for strength to overcome your present fears. They are the effects of pride, or infidelity, or both. After once or twice the difficulty will be over. . . . My Lord, you are upon my heart. Methinks I would undergo the pangs of the new birth for you; but Jesus can carry you through."

Again we find him writing to "Lady F—— S——": "My heart's desire and continued prayer is that your Ladyship, having put your hand to the plow, may be kept from looking back! Satan will not be wanting to exert his utmost efforts to divert you from the cross. He knows of what influence your Ladyship's example must necessarily be, and therefore will always be striving to persuade your Ladyship at least to compound matters, and to at-

me I have thoughts of taking an American Voyage—
Who knows but we may meet once more on this side
Jordan? Lord Jesus help us in all things to say,
not my will but thine be done—I can as yet preach
but twice or thrice a week—But the Redeemer is
able to do more for me—I know you will pray
that He may—Oh my Dr. Friend, study I entreat
you study to live near Him—Look up continually
for the aids of His blessed Spirit & you
shall be helped to adorn the Gospel in all things
That this may be your happy lot is the ear-
nest prayer of my Dr. Friend

Yours etc in our Common
Redeemer
G Whitefield

AUTOGRAPH LETTER BY WHITEFIELD

[London, March 25, 1762] If the Redeemer spares me I have thoughts of taking an American Voyage—Who knows but we may meet once more on this side Jordan? Lord Jesus help us in all things to say, not my will but thine be done—I can as yet preach but twice or thrice a week—But the Redeemer is able to do more for me—I know you will pray that He may—Oh my Dr. Friend, study I entreat you study to live near Him—Look up continually for the aids of His blessed Spirit & you shall be helped to adorn the Gospel in all things—That this may be your happy lot is the earnest prayer of my Dr. Friend

Yours, etc in our Common Redeemer

G Whitefield

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tempt to reconcile two irreconcilable differences—Christ and the world. But your Ladyship is too well grounded to hearken to his delusive insinuations, and too noble to refuse to give your whole heart to him who has bought it with no less price than that of his own most precious blood. What a price is now put into your Ladyship's hands! What a glorious opportunity is now afforded you, to show even before kings, that we are made kings indeed, and priests unto God! Methinks I see angels gazing to see how your Ladyship acts your part. O that the angel of the everlasting covenant may always accompany you, and by the power of his eternal and all-conquering spirit, enable your Ladyship to fight the good fight of faith, and run with patience the glorious race that is set before you!"

We are safe in saying that by voice and pen, through a whole generation, George Whitefield did more than any other man to arouse a new religious faith in the higher circles of English society.

CHAPTER IX
RANGING AND HUNTING IN
AMERICA

We lead a moving life, but I trust we move heavenward.

Eternity! Eternity! The very writing or hearing of this word is enough to make one dead to the world and alive to God.

CHAPTER IX

RANGING AND HUNTING IN AMERICA

WHITEFIELD's first visit to America, in the summer of 1738, was very brief. After a few weeks in Savannah he returned to England, partly to complete his ordination to the priesthood and partly to obtain money for the proposed orphanage. The following summer he sailed again for these Western shores, landing near Cape Henlopen, on the Delaware coast, and riding through the forest to Philadelphia. This time he remained in America more than a year, becoming fairly introduced to the people on whom he was to make so deep and lasting an impression. When he left England it was supposed he would quietly settle in Savannah as minister of the parish church. Impossible for such a man! He went down to Georgia but was too restless to stay there. True, he needed help for the orphanage from the wealthy colonies in the North; but, far more, he was a prophet, with a divine message as a burning fire shut up in his bones, a message not for an obscure corner but for the entire land. And soon we find him entering on that long series of journeys, North and South, which continued at intervals till his death in 1770.

WHITEFIELD: PROPHET—PREACHER

AMERICA IN WHITEFIELD'S TIME

The America that Whitefield knew was not only quite unlike the America of to-day, but in many ways it differed from the mother country. The population was sparse and there were only three cities of any size—Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. For many years Boston led, but before the Revolution Philadelphia had leaped forward and proudly boasted of 32,000 inhabitants; New York followed with 23,000, and Boston dropped into third place with only 16,000.

Transportation was tedious, and so far as possible waterways were used. Roads may have been none too good in England, but they were boulevards compared with those in America. Outside of the cities wheeled vehicles were unknown till the middle of the eighteenth century; people traveled on horseback. The first stagecoach between New York and Philadelphia was put on in 1756. In fair weather the distance of ninety miles was covered in three days. No wonder that Whitefield shunned winter travel. It was conducive neither to good spirits nor good health, to arrive at an inn at ten o'clock at night, worn, famished, and half frozen; swallow a bit of cold supper, climb into a cold bed, and at three in the morning climb out again, dress by the feeble light of a farthing candle, and amid snow and ice start off on another eighteen-hour journey. In 1769, shortly before White-

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field made his last trip North, a faster coach, drawn by young and spirited horses, was put on this route. People along the way left their work and watched with astonishment the "Flying Machine," as it was called, go whizzing by. The rate of speed may be estimated by remembering that it still took two days to make the ninety miles! It was two years after Whitefield's death before the first coach was started between Boston and New York. It ran only twice a month and a distance that is now traveled in five hours took thirteen days.

Taverns were rather common. They bore such appealing names as "The Penny Pot House," "The Jolly Tar Inn," "The Crooked Billet Inn," "Mrs. Mullin's Beefsteak House," or "The Blue Anchor Tavern," and some of them were famous for their cooking. In order to keep the meat slowly revolving before the fire, it was the custom in many kitchens to train small dogs to run in hollow cylinders, like squirrels, the cylinders being attached to the turning-jacks. The old annals tell of more than one impatient traveler who was delayed in dining, while the servants were scurrying around after truant canines.

Although Whitefield frequently stopped at taverns, more often he was invited to private homes. It was the rule, especially in the more sparsely settled districts, to entertain freely anyone who came along. Many of the well-to-do settlers were in the habit, every night, of setting out a table loaded with

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food, so that the chance wayfarer could help himself. All this greatly impressed Whitefield. Again and again he exclaimed, "The Americans are the most hospitable people under heaven."

Most of the homes, both in town and country, were surprisingly comfortable. This was especially true in Philadelphia. The dwellings were well built, usually of brick, with projecting roofs and wide porches, and many were surrounded with spacious gardens. Often a sundial was set in the wall. Carpets were not common, for most people preferred bare floors, scrubbed every day and sprinkled with white sand. Those old-time, rambling houses, with their tiny window-panes and the huge open fireplaces, bedsteads so high that a cradle could be slipped under them, spinning-wheel and loom-shuttle, tallow-candle and warming-pan, with all the rest that belonged to that day, had nothing sumptuous, but they could boast of solid comfort. In such homes Whitefield was entertained many a time.

As the years went by, the private coach and sedan-chair became common with the wealthier families, and fashion grew more exacting in her demands. Society leaders among the women were resplendent in silks and satins, velvets and brocades. It was also the custom to pile up the hair to prodigious heights and in extraordinary shapes. Of course professional hairdressers were required,

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and on the eve of some notable function these artists began early, so that frequently a colonial dame was ready to start for a ball twenty-four hours ahead of time, and she must needs sit up all night, scarcely stirring lest she play havoc with the upper works. We can readily imagine what Whitefield thought of all this. Many a time, in public and in private, with no uncertain sound, he delivered his soul concerning female frivolities.

Whitefield soon discovered that on the whole, morals in America were higher than in England. There were fewer serious crimes, such as highway robbery and murder, while official corruption was far less common. It was likewise true that law-breakers were treated with greater humanity. At the very period when the statute books of England specified more than two hundred crimes punishable with death, Massachusetts named twenty and Pennsylvania only two.

Of course drinking was well-nigh universal. The records tell of occasional banquets where more than a hundred different dishes were served, and quantities of liquor almost past belief were consumed. It was worse in Philadelphia than in Boston, so that when John Adams came South on a visit he stood aghast at what he saw, though he presently fell in with Philadelphia's ways. A funeral was a great time for feasting. If the deceased was a person of note, thousands attended, and the eating and drinking were on an immense scale. But while Boston

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may have been more sober than Philadelphia, it was by no means "dry." Less than ten years after the Great Awakening swept over Massachusetts, rum-making in the colony was at its height, with sixty-three distilleries at work. It was estimated that more than nine hundred vessels, sailing from Boston and neighboring ports, regularly carried rum as a part of their cargo, either for use on board or for sale in other lands. Yet the Puritan conscience was apparently undisturbed. Nor did Whitefield ever lift his voice against the liquor traffic. On his first visit to Georgia he deplored the fact that the home government would not permit the colonists to import either rum or slaves, and when, a little later, the ban on rum was removed, he was highly gratified. Needless to say, though not a total abstainer, he was strictly temperate, and he always abhorred drunkenness; yet it seems never to have occurred to him to strike at the root of the evil. But such were the times in which he lived, and it must be frankly admitted that on some questions the evangelist was not in advance of the times.

Conscience is often curiously erratic. The Puritans looked askance at the theater, but they were extremely fond of cock-fighting, and they saw no harm in the lottery. Massachusetts went in wholeheartedly for distilleries, and then passed a law sternly forbidding kissing on the streets between the sexes as a gross indecency. As late as 1759 a

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Boston sea-captain, returning from a long cruise, and meeting his wife on the wharf, saluted her as one would naturally expect. At once he was arrested and sentenced by the outraged magistrate to be publicly whipped.

Nothing in America impressed Whitefield more happily than the way in which the Sabbath was observed, especially in New England. He often referred to it in letters to English friends. Even in a city as large as Boston the stillness was almost deathlike. Everyone who could do so went to church. There was no strolling, and if a group happened to linger on the street for conversation, they were quickly dispersed by a vigilant constable. Some of the clergy were so strict that they refused to baptize babies born on Sunday. But one of these ministers was put to unexpected and painful confusion, when on a Sunday morning his own wife presented him with twins. The old annals intimate that from that time the nonbaptism rule fell into serious disfavor.

At church the men and women, as a rule, sat apart. If there was a gallery, it was reserved for the children, who were kept in order by elderly and solemn-faced women, armed with light rods. The churches were unheated save for the small individual warming-pans, and the discomfort during a New England winter must have been extreme. Yet the people flocked to worship and rarely do we read of a complaint.

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TRAVELING IN THE SOUTH

As we have already seen, Whitefield sailed for America on his second voyage in the summer of 1739. He arrived in Philadelphia November 2. A few days later he began the overland journey to his distant parish in the south. The farther he went the rougher and wilder became the country. Often the way lay through almost trackless forests, with treacherous swamps, and streams swollen with the winter rains. Settlements were few and far apart and he rarely knew where the night would be spent. Occasionally, coming to a clearing, and passing through a pack of yelping hounds, he would find a rude but welcome hospitality under some planter's roof. Now and then a wayside cabin, boasting that it was a tavern, offered primitive entertainment. Often he was thankful for a bed of leaves under a friendly tree. A fire was soon kindled, and as the weary preacher lay down and listened to the howling of the wolves, he gratefully reflected that as the fire of brushwood kept off the wild beasts, so "the fire of God's love keeps the devil off."

These experiences were decidedly new to the young Englishman, but he enjoyed them, and through the years, as opportunity came, he continued his forest journeys. As he once wrote to John Wesley: "If you ask what I am doing? I answer, 'Ranging and hunting in the American woods after poor sinners.'" And there was need of it. Much

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PHILADELPHIA.

On Friday last the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD, arrived here, with his Friends from New-York, where he preach'd eight Times; and on his Return hither preach'd at Elizabeth-Town, Brunswick, Maidenhead, Trenton, Nesbamy and Abingdon. He has preach'd twice every Day in the Church to great Crowds, except Tuesday, when he preach'd at German-Town, from a Balcony to about 5000 People in the Street: And last Night the Crowd was so great to hear his farewell Sermon, that the Church could not contain one half, whereupon they withdrew to Society-Hill, where he preach'd from a Balcony to a Multitude, computed at not less than 10,000 People. He left this City to day, and is to preach at Chester; to morrow at Willings Town, Saturday at New-Castle, Sunday at Whiteclay-Creek, and so proceed on his Way to Georgia, thro' Maryland, Virginia and Carolina.

Custom House, Philadelphia, Entred in.

Sloop St. Augustine, John Denmark, from New-York.

Sloop Swan, Burgeis Hall, from Boston.

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Brigt. Squirrel, William Hill, for Jamaica.

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Day our Captain had a Letter from him, which was sent with all possible haste, which I suppose is for us to dispatch for that Place: The Rebellious Negroes are now stopt from doing any further Mischief, many of them having been put to the most cruel Death. The yellow Fever is abated, but has been very Mortal.

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On Thursday last the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD, left this City, and was accompany'd to Chester by about 150 Horse, and preach'd there to about 7000 People; on Friday he preach'd twice at Willings-Town to about 5000; on Saturday at New-Castle to about 2500, and the same Evening at Christian-Bridge to about 3000; on Sunday at Whiteclay-Creek he preach'd twice, resting about half an Hour between the Sermons, to about 8000, of whom about 3000 'tis computed came on Horse-back, it rain'd most of the Time and yet they stood in the open Air: On Monday he was to preach at North-East, and then proceed directly for Annapolis.

Custom House, Philadelphia, Entred in.

SLOOP { Vulcan, Matthias King, from Rhode-Island.
Sammel and Mary, John Dunn, from S. Carolina.
Industry, John Meas, from Barbadoes.
Content, Bethuel Gardner, from Boston.
Brigt. Martha, Gurney Wall, from Barbadoes.

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of the Southland was a spiritual desert. In many sections a clergyman had never been seen, and the people were practically heathen. The coming of Whitefield was like the visit of an angel. He touched lives everywhere, one or two, a family, perhaps a group of twenty; if a hundred gathered, he called it "extraordinary," considering the scant population. It showed the genius of the man that he could so readily adapt himself to any occasion. Without doubt he was in his glory when speaking to thousands; but he was also happy and effective with a score.

It was on these journeys in the South that he came into close contact with slavery. He was warmly interested in the Negroes. At one time he planned a large school for them, and he never ceased to labor for their conversion. He sternly rebuked those planters who would not permit their slaves to attend a preaching service on the plea that religion would make them proud and disobedient. More than once he imperiled his standing in the South by his vigorous denunciation of the many masters who treated their slaves cruelly. And yet the unpleasant fact must be recorded that to the end of his life he was a defender of slavery. In this he was out of accord with numerous leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. When he and John Wesley first came to Georgia the trustees of the colony forbade the importation of slaves. Wesley encouraged this stand, as did many others, but

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Whitefield condemned it. He believed that in such a hot climate work in the fields could be done only by Negroes, and that meant slaves. So he begged for them, and when the trustees yielded, he publicly rejoiced. At the very time that Wesley, reflecting the best conscience of England and America, was denouncing slavery as "that execrable sum of all villainies," Whitefield was himself becoming a slave-owner, in purchasing slaves for the orphanage-farm. And in his will he disposed of his slaves as mere chattels, along with cattle and carts. We do not question the great preacher's perfect sincerity, but even his most ardent admirers must confess that at this point his ethical insight was deficient.

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN AMERICA

Whitefield's first overland journey to Savannah ended on January 10, 1740. During his brief stay there he resigned his parish, and henceforth he was free to devote more time to the orphans, and to become, as he called it, "a gospel rover." A few weeks later he was back in Pennsylvania. A great work awaited him, especially in the more thickly peopled territory from Philadelphia to Boston. A nation was in the making; everything was at the formative stage; influences in those years meant far more than they could a generation or two later.

We cannot doubt that Whitefield had come to America for such a time as this. To be sure, re-

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ligion was not as dead here as in England. In most parts there was no overshadowing state church; Dissenters were in the majority; there was more freedom, spontaneity, life. But conditions were far from satisfying. Many of the Episcopal clergy, especially in Maryland and Virginia, were sadly lacking, not only in scholarship but in morals. In Pennsylvania and to the north, the Presbyterians were strong in numbers but weak in religion. Church membership among them was scarcely more than a form. Anyone could join whose conduct was decent and who accepted the creed. With rare exceptions revivals were unheard of.

It was not much better in New England. The early Puritans emphasized the New Birth. To them religion was intensely real. In many churches revival flames never went out, summer or winter. Conversions in the regular services were so frequent that it was a common inquiry by those unable to attend, "Were any awakened?" But those days passed, and there followed a spiritual chill that was deadening. Then, in 1734, at Northampton, Massachusetts, during the ministry of Jonathan Edwards, there began the Great Awakening. It swept from place to place with consuming power and carried all before it. But two years later its initial force was well-nigh spent, and then—what of the future?

Was there not a heavenly coincidence in the fact

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that at the very time when the Holy Club at Oxford was sending out the leaders of the Evangelical Revival which spread over Britain and beyond, the Great Awakening in America was getting under way? And George Whitefield, born again in the Holy Club, was the chosen apostle of the Lord in linking together these two awakenings that finally merged in the vast movement which changed the religious face of the English-speaking world. He came to America just in time to infuse new energy into the languishing work begun under Edwards, and to thrust it forward like a flaming torch into all the colonies. The keynote of his preaching on this side of the sea was the same as in England, "Ye must be born again!" Granted that he was too narrow in his interpretation of the New Birth, that oftentimes he was censorious and intolerant, yet there can be no doubt that he laid his hand on the deadly weakness of the church when he pointed out how many there were, of the most approved standing, both laymen and ministers, who had no saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This unhappy state of affairs was due in part to the strange teaching of Solomon Stoddard, one of the most distinguished ministers that New England ever produced. For nearly sixty years, prior to his grandson, Jonathan Edwards, he had been pastor of the famous church at Northampton. In the latter part of his pastorate, the "venerable Stoddard," as he was called, published his belief

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that while conversion was desirable it was not essential, that people might be welcomed to the communion and received into the church without it; that young collegians who had also studied theology might be ordained to the ministry provided only they accepted the creed and their lives were not scandalous. Though in many quarters these ideas met with vigorous opposition, as time passed they came to prevail rather widely, not only in New England, but far beyond.

We can readily imagine what the flaming young prophet of the New Birth would say to all this. He had been in Pennsylvania scarcely a week before he discovered that many of the preachers in those parts held very lax notions. The Tennents were notable exceptions. This remarkable family came from Ireland in 1718, and the four sons as well as the father were all ministers. The elder Tennent founded a school at Neshaminy, not far from Philadelphia, where some of the most distinguished ministers of that period received their education. This "Log College," as it was long called, became the parent of every Presbyterian college and theological seminary in America.

Gilbert Tennent, one of the sons, was Whitefield's fast friend and fellow-worker. He ardently sympathized with his English brother respecting the New Birth and the need of a converted ministry. He was a veritable Boanerges, thundering his philippics against the low standards of those

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days. His Presbyterian brethren were so deeply offended that they excluded him from their Synod, but it did not disturb him in the least. In 1743 he organized a company of Whitefield's converts in Philadelphia into a church, and served as its pastor till his death in 1765. This old organization, associated with some of Whitefield's earliest victories, continues in downtown Philadelphia, in a most flourishing condition, ranking as one of the leading Presbyterian churches in America.

WHITEFIELD IN NEW ENGLAND

It was not till September, 1740, that Whitefield arrived in Boston for the first time. He had been impatient to visit Puritan New England, and New England had been impatient to see and hear the young man of whose extraordinary preaching so many reports had come, both from beyond the sea and from the colonies to the south. The Bostonians fairly shook off their staid ways in welcoming the newcomer. Several miles from the city he was met by a cavalcade of distinguished citizens, with the governor's son at the head, and escorted into town. Most of the ministers were very cordial, though one eminent doctor of divinity, meeting him on the street, said, with a scowl, "I am sorry to see *you* here!"

"So is the devil," was the smiling reply.

But, as a rule, he was received with high honor. At once he began to preach. What crowds!

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Boston had never seen the like. And better than the crowds of mere listeners were the numbers who were awakened. Day after day, from early morning, the house where the preacher was entertained was besieged with weeping men and women, begging for a word of prayer and counsel, that they might find God. And others, who did not come, wrote, asking to be prayed for.

More than once he spoke before the faculty and students of Harvard College, where he was treated with great respect. The young men were mightily stirred. Word came to Whitefield: "The College is entirely changed; the students are full of God; . . . the voice of prayer and praise fills their chambers." So glorious was the work of grace that the overseers set apart an entire morning for a service of thanksgiving to God. One of Whitefield's open-air preaching places was under the noble Cambridge elm, where, thirty-five years later, Washington took command of the Continental army; so that this spot is doubly hallowed.

No one in all New England was more deeply sympathetic with Whitefield's mission than Governor Belcher, of Massachusetts. He was constantly showing his intense interest. One morning "he took me by myself," wrote Whitefield, "and exhorted me to go on in stirring up the ministers. . . . As we were going to meeting, he said, 'Mr. Whitefield, do not spare rulers any more than ministers, no, not the chief of them.' I preached in the open air to

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some thousands. The word fell with weight. After the sermon the governor remarked, 'I pray God, I may apply what has been said to my own heart. Pray, Mr. Whitefield, that I may hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Dinner being ended, with tears in his eyes, he kissed me, and took leave of me."

On his first visit to New England Whitefield remained less than a month, but he started a train of events that left an impress for all time. A revival began in Boston that fall which continued for a year and a half. Sunday after Sunday the churches were crowded. No less than thirty religious societies were organized. The old annals relate that "the very face of the town seemed to be strangely altered. Even the Negroes and boys in the streets left their usual rudeness, and taverns were found empty of all but lodgers." During the winter of 1741 thousands of converts were enrolled.

Before leaving New England Whitefield visited Northampton and preached four times for Jonathan Edwards. A revival broke out, which, under the fostering care of Edwards, went on for two years. Nearly every place in New England that Whitefield touched during those few weeks was affected in a similar way. But, after all, these results were only incidental; there was something still deeper. The prophet of the New Birth, with fearless and flaming zeal, preached this mighty truth among the children of the Puritans, as he had

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everywhere else. Nothing could serve in its place. Baptism, orthodox belief, moral conduct, church membership? All important, but—“*Ye must be born again!*” Woe unto unconverted ministers! Woe unto unconverted laymen! And woe unto the churches that tolerated them! This was the burden of the Lord as committed to George Whitefield.

But though the message was inspired, unhappily the way in which it was sometimes presented was not inspired. If the youth of 1740 had been the mature and more restrained man of 1760, or later, many blunders would have been avoided. By nature Whitefield was strongly emotional and impulsive. He came to America and up into New England with a consuming conviction. His fame had preceded him, and he was welcomed with unmeasured adulation. When he began to preach many wept and shouted for joy. They said he was “an angel of God”; they compared him to Saint Paul, and declared that it was “Puritanism come to life.” He was a mere “stripling,” as he often called himself; and though his daily prayer was that he might be kept humble, he would have been more than human had he not been somewhat turned by the praises of men. We must admit that he often acted as if, by divine appointment, he was supreme religious censor.

Unfortunately, no sooner did he arrive in Boston than several extremists caught his ear and gave

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him unsound advice, and, instead of waiting to form his own sober judgment, he leaped to conclusions. He decided that conditions in the land of the Puritans were worse than they really were, and he hurled his anathemas in a rather wholesale and indiscriminate fashion, especially against "unconverted" ministers. Jonathan Edwards, who was eleven years his senior, whispered a word of caution, but it only served to irritate him. His best friends were disturbed, though they tried to excuse him on the ground that he was swept away by youthful zeal. To make matters still worse, his private *Journal*, containing severe strictures on persons and churches in New England, he allowed to be printed, and it soon passed into circulation.

As if to add fuel to a fire already menacing, after Whitefield left New England, fanatics sprang up on every hand, imitators of the great preacher, with his faults but without his virtues and talents. They itinerated from place to place and did untold mischief. Is it any wonder that before many months passed, Boston and all the country round was seething with angry protests?

In the meantime Whitefield had returned to his native shores, and it was not till the fall of 1744, after an interval of four years, that he again visited New England. This time no cavalcade came forth to meet him. Governor Belcher had moved to New Jersey, and hence there was no official welcome. At once Whitefield felt a strange chill. Ministers who

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had been cordial now held aloof, and pulpits were not clamoring for him as before. Associations of preachers passed resolutions opposing him, while both Harvard and Yale, where he had been received with every mark of honor, published formal "Declarations" against him. Innumerable pamphlets concerning him and his work came from the press, and all but three were unfavorable.

Whitefield was a sensitive soul and he felt all this keenly, but he never lost his balance. He humbly confessed that more than once youthful zeal had carried him too far, and he had said things that ought never to have been uttered. He also insisted—and he was right—that some of his statements had been misunderstood or had been grossly exaggerated. But while he admitted his faults, he receded not a hair's breadth from his stand on the New Birth. His foes might dub him "Reverend Stripling," and sneer at him as a man of "a weak mind, little learning, and no argument"; they might complain that he "plagued" them with his straightforward preaching, and had created "scenes of confusion and disturbance"; they might criticize him for allowing converts to go about the streets singing psalms and hymns; even a member of the Harvard faculty, of a mathematical bent, might figure that every day Whitefield preached in Boston the upset to business, due to the eagerness of the people to hear him, meant a loss to the community of no less than a thousand pounds; but none of these things

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disturbed him. He had a prophet's vision and a prophet's message. "An opposer told me," said he, "that I had unhinged many good sort of people. I believe it." And he went right on unhinging people who were clinging to a barren faith. Only he had learned a lesson; he became more guarded in his judgments, less censorious in his language.

In spite of the blunders and ill feeling of some of those early New England days, a wonderful work was wrought. During the Great Awakening, which began under Edwards and was helped forward by Whitefield, forty thousand souls were added to the churches—extraordinary when we think of the sparse population. In and around Boston alone no less than twenty ministers acknowledged that they never knew what conversion meant till Whitefield came among them. And, still better, for once and all a quietus was put on the idea of an "unconverted ministry." Now and then New England might criticize Whitefield, but through all the years it tugged at his heart-strings. He loved it, so rich in Puritan memories, and he expressed his constant longing when he wrote to a friend, "Affection, intense affection, cries aloud, 'Away to New England, to dear New England directly!'" And in turn, New England's admiration and love for the great-hearted evangelist grew apace. As the years went by, old-time differences were forgotten and every visit was more triumphant than the last. It mattered not where or when he

Wednesday Nov. 28th

Opened my publick administrations at Boston this afternoon at Dr. Colemans meeting house from Rom: 1st 16th I am not ashamed of the Gospel of X^t, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—The congregation was very large, several ministers were present & the word was attended with a sweet power—Several things in the Chapter which I hinted at in the preface of my discourse seemed to be applicable to my circumstances & much affected my heart—For I could thank my God through Jesus X^t verse 8th that the faith & revival of religion in New England was spoken of throughout the world—And I could say verse 9th God is my witness, whom I

SECTION OF WHITEFIELD'S JOURNAL

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preached, night or day, no building could hold the crowds. He left an impress that will never be lost. It was fitting that his closing days should be spent there, and that this land of the Pilgrim Fathers should become the guardian of his tomb.

On his first visit to New England Whitefield went by sea. He returned overland, stopping at New Haven and preaching to the Yale students. As we have already seen, later there came a break with Yale and Harvard, but it was temporary. He was intensely interested in both institutions. When the Harvard library was burned he was in this country. At once he made an urgent appeal to his friends in London to send books for a new collection, and the response was so large that he received the hearty thanks of the College. Yale grew very fond of him. On one occasion, after preaching, "The president came to me," he tells us, "as I was going off in the chaise, and informed me that the students were so deeply impressed by the sermon that they were gone into the chapel, and earnestly entreated me to give them one more quarter of an hour's exhortation." For many years both schools were afflicted with a type of aristocracy, foolish as it was offensive. The students were seated in chapel and at recitations, in strict accordance with the social status of their parents, and the same cheap discrimination was carried into all college affairs. One can easily imagine how the Oxford graduate, who could never forget the days when

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he earned a living by mopping floors, would despise such foolery; and there can be no doubt that his sturdy preaching of Christian democracy did much to shatter the old custom. Yale gave it up in 1767, and in 1770, the very year of Whitefield's death, Harvard followed suit.

IN NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA

On his American tours Whitefield spent less time in New York than in either Boston or Philadelphia. The opportunities to present his message were limited. The city was smaller; for some reason the Episcopal Church would never admit him to its pulpit; and the numerous adherents of the Dutch Reformed faith were naturally shy toward a minister of alien blood. Down in Wall Street there was a Presbyterian church, for many years the only one in the city of that denomination. Later a second one, familiarly called the "Brick Meeting," was erected in Beekman Street, "in the field," as people said in those days. Whitefield was always welcome at these two churches, and so great was the work done that the old Wall Street building had to be enlarged several times to make room for the growing membership.

He was especially fond of talking to sailors. He had been at sea so much that he knew just how to approach them. One day, when speaking to a crowd of tars down by the East River, he drew this picture: "Well, my boys, we have a cloudless sky,

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and are making fine headway over a smooth sea, before a light breeze, and we shall soon lose sight of land. But what means this sudden lowering of the heavens, and that dark cloud arising from beneath the western horizon? Hark! don't you hear the distant thunder? Don't you see the flashes of lightning? There is a storm gathering. Every man to his duty! How the waves rush and dash against the ship! The air is dark! The tempest rages! Our masts are gone! What next?" For an instant he paused, while his excited listeners cried, "Take to the long-boat, sir!" It gave the preacher the very chance he coveted to press home the lesson.

The way south from New York to Philadelphia is dotted with places associated with Whitefield's ministry. Of them all, none appeals to us as strongly as Princeton, or *Prince Town*, as it used to be called. Jonathan Belcher, who was such a warm friend of Whitefield's in Massachusetts, afterward became governor of New Jersey, and in 1748 he obtained a royal charter for a Presbyterian school, that came to be known as New Jersey College. It was genuinely Christian, and from the first Whitefield was peculiarly drawn to it. In England he met deputations sent over to raise money, introduced them to the Countess of Huntingdon and other persons of eminence, signed a public appeal, preached sermons, and in various ways helped to secure considerable sums. When in America he visited the College as often as possible,

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and was the favorite preacher. Here was a school after his own heart. Nassau Hall will always be a more sacred place because its walls echoed to the voice and the footfall of George Whitefield.

The great preacher was especially fond of the city of William Penn, and the city was no less fond of him. It was the first place of any size that he visited in America, and some of his outstanding work was done there. Granted, his ways and words were not always approved. Many of the Quakers shook their heads, though, as one of them with exquisite serenity, remarked: "His intentions are good, but he has not yet arrived at such perfection as to see so far as he yet may." At first the Episcopalians received him, and then they turned against him; but it was in part his own fault. As we have already seen, in his early ministry, especially, he was not always discreet, and he excited antagonism where there should have been none.

But in spite of his plain preaching the city as a whole stood with him, and increasingly as the years passed. While some complained that he "threw a horrid gloom" over the place, there were enthusiastic admirers and many of them. What preaching! The crowds never had enough. On one occasion, when he rose to speak at Chester, he faced nearly a thousand people who had followed him all the way from Philadelphia, twelve miles, most of them on foot. Another time, many went as far as New Brunswick, sixty miles to the north. At a period

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when the average Philadelphia minister looked upon a stipend of a hundred pounds a year as ample, Whitefield was offered eight hundred pounds if he would spend six months annually in the city, leaving him free to travel at will the rest of the year. Needless to say, he refused to be fettered. As time passed, opposition ceased, all doors were thrown open; not only were the people at large blessed, but, what was far more significant, scores of ministers of various denominations entered into a new religious experience.

FRIENDSHIP WITH FRANKLIN

By far the most interesting friendship that Whitefield formed in Philadelphia, if not in all America, was with Benjamin Franklin. When Whitefield arrived in the city, in the fall of 1739, Franklin was a young man of thirty-three. He was already publishing a weekly paper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and was the leading printer in the city. On the alert for new business, he at once got in touch with the famous stranger and arranged to print his sermons and Journals. This was the beginning of a warm friendship that continued unbroken till Whitefield's death. Franklin's comments on the great preacher are as racy as they are informing. Writing of what happened in 1740, he says: "The multitudes, of all sects and denominations, that attended his sermons, were enormous, and it was a matter of speculation to me to observe

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the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers, and how much they admired and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them, by assuring them that they were naturally half beasts and half devils. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless and indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through Philadelphia in the morning without hearing psalms sung in different families on every street."

He tells us that Whitefield "had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his words so perfectly that he might be heard and understood at a great distance, especially as his auditories observed the most perfect silence. He preached one evening from the top of the Court House steps, which are in the middle of Market Street, and on the west side of Second Street, which crosses it at right angles. Both streets were filled with his hearers to a considerable distance. Being among the hindermost in Market Street, I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be heard, by retiring backward down the street toward the river, and I found his voice distinct till I came near Front Street, when some noise in the street obscured it. Imagining, then, a semicircle, of which my distance should be the radius, and that it was filled with auditors, to each of whom I allowed two square feet, I computed that he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand."

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Franklin was greatly impressed with the way Whitefield secured large collections for the orphan house in Savannah. "His eloquence had wonderful power over the hearts and purses of his hearers, of which I myself was an instance. I did not disapprove of the design; but, as Georgia was then destitute of materials and workmen, and it was proposed to send them from Philadelphia at great expense, I thought it would have been better to have built the house at Philadelphia, and to have brought the children to it. This I advised; but he was resolute in his first project, and rejected my counsel; and, I therefore, refused to contribute. I happened some time after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection; and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper. Another stroke of his oratory determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collection dish, gold and all. At this sermon there was also one of our Club, who, being of my sentiments respecting the building in Georgia, and suspecting a collection might be intended, emptied his pocket before he came from home. Toward the conclusion of the discourse, however, he felt a strong inclination to give, and applied to a neighbor who stood

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near him, to lend him money for the purpose. The request was fortunately made to, perhaps, the only man in the company who had the firmness not to be affected by the preacher. His answer was, 'At any other time, friend Hopkinson, I would lend thee freely, but not now, for thee seems to be out of thy right senses.' "

This was by no means the only occasion when Whitefield almost lifted the people out of their "right senses" by his moving appeals for the orphans. One day in Boston he received more than a thousand pounds. This may have been the time when "Old Father Flynt," as the students called him, had his experience. He was a member of the Harvard faculty and was well known for his parsimony. One day he yielded to the request of another officer of the College and went to hear Whitefield preach. He was so swept away by the eloquence of the hour that when the collection was taken almost unconsciously he drew a bill from his pocket and dropped it in the box. On his way home he scarcely opened his mouth, and when a student asked how he liked Whitefield, he roared: "Like him! why the dog has robbed me of a five-pound note!"

His foes were constantly assailing him at this point. One of them issued a public warning in which he amiably remarked: "Let all good people beware of this stroller, for he will yet find a way to wheedle you out of your money. He is as artful

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a mountebank as any I know." No doubt the writer was ignorant of the fact that every penny of the collections, together with a considerable part of Whitefield's own meager resources, went to the Georgia work that was so dear to his heart.

Through all the years Whitefield sought, in a wise and loving spirit, to draw Franklin closer to God. In a letter from London, in 1752, he wrote: "I find that you grow more and more famous in the learned world. As you have made a pretty considerable progress in the mysteries of electricity, I would now humbly recommend to your diligent unprejudiced pursuit and study the mysteries of the New Birth. It is a most important, interesting study, and when mastered, will richly answer and repay for all your pains. . . . You will excuse this freedom. I must have *aliquid Christi* [something of Christ] in all my letters."

What was probably the last letter he wrote to him closed with the words: "Ere long . . . angels shall summon us to attend on the funeral of time, and we shall see eternity rising out of its ashes. That you and I may be in the happy number of those who . . . shall cry 'Amen! Hallelujah!' is the hearty prayer of, my dear Doctor, yours, etc., George Whitefield." After Whitefield died, Franklin wrote of him: "Our friendship was sincere on both sides, and lasted to his death. He used sometimes to pray for my conversion, but never had the satisfaction of believing that his prayers were

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heard. Upon one of his arrivals from England at Boston he wrote to me that he should come soon to Philadelphia, but knew not where he could lodge when there, as his old friend and host, Mr. Benezet, was removed to German Town. My answer was: 'You know my house. If you can make shift with its scanty accommodations, you will be most heartily welcome.' He replied that, if I had made that kind offer for *Christ's* sake, I should not miss of a reward. And I returned, 'Don't let me be mistaken; it is not for *Christ's* sake, but for *your* sake!' This incident will show the terms on which we stood."

But though Whitefield's prayers were not fully answered, we have reason to believe that no one influenced the religious life of Franklin as did he. Franklin thoroughly believed in him. As he once said to his own brother John, "He is a good man and I love him." When the news reached Philadelphia that Whitefield was dead, his old-time friend was deeply moved, and with a full heart he penned these lines: "I knew him intimately upward of thirty years. His integrity, disinterestedness, and indefatigable zeal in prosecuting every good work I have never seen equaled, and shall never see excelled." No worthier tribute was ever paid to the memory of George Whitefield.

There was one enterprise to which these two men were linked up which developed far beyond any hope or dream. Soon after Whitefield first came

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to Philadelphia several of the clergymen became offended with him and withdrew permission for him to use their pulpits. Weather conditions often made open-air preaching impracticable, and in order that a place of suitable size should always be available when he was in town, a group of his friends decided, in 1740, to erect a building, primarily for Whitefield himself, but which on occasion might be used by other ministers.

At the same time the trustees, knowing the young preacher's intense interest in the religious education of neglected children, and the work he was planning to do in Georgia, organized what they described as "A Charity School, for the instruction of poor children gratis, in useful literature and the knowledge of the Christian religion." Whitefield was made a trustee, and was commissioned to select a Master and Mistress. The school was to be housed in the "New Building," as it was called; but for some reason, probably lack of funds, the teaching project did not at once materialize. In the meantime Benjamin Franklin was trying to interest the citizens of Philadelphia in the founding of a regular Academy. In 1749 matters came to a head, and, in looking around for a place to house the students, the trustees of the Academy arranged with the trustees of the "New Building" to take over the property, agreeing to pay off a burdensome debt, reserve a place for preaching, and maintain the Charity School. The deed of transfer used the

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very words quoted above. The new plan received Whitefield's hearty approval. The Academy was opened; in 1755 it was incorporated as the College of Philadelphia, and in 1791 it became the University of Pennsylvania. The interesting and significant fact is that in all the changes the original language of the Charity School was carried along, and these identical words appear in the present charter of the University. In 1877 the Charity School itself was given up as no longer needed, but in its place a sum of money is expended annually in the free education of young men, not otherwise able to pay for tuition, and so the charter provision is being carried out. Thus this famous institution is directly linked with the projected school of 1740, with which Whitefield was so intimately connected. It is eminently fitting that in the dormitory triangle of the University, where thousands of students pass it daily, there should stand a handsome bronze statue of Whitefield. It was erected in 1919 by alumni of the University who are ministers and laymen of the Methodist Church, and it shows the young preacher as he appeared on his first visit to Philadelphia.

CHAPTER X
WHITEFIELD THE PREACHER

Lo! by the Merrimack WHITEFIELD stands
In the temple that never was made by hands,
Curtains of azure, and crystal wall,
And dome of the sunshine over all!
A homeless pilgrim, with dubious name
Blown about on the winds of fame;
Now as an angel of blessing classed,
And now as a mad enthusiast.
Called in his youth to sound and gauge
The moral lapse of his race and age,
And, sharp as truth, the contrast draw
Of human frailty and human law;
Possessed by the one dread thought that lent
Its goad to his fiery Temperament,
Up and down the world he went,
A John the Baptist crying, "Repent!"

—*From Whittier's "The Preacher."*

I would not but be a poor, despised minister of Jesus
Christ for ten thousand worlds.

CHAPTER X

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“EVERY one hath his proper gift,” Whitefield once said. He was thinking of himself and of his own work and methods. He was not a theologian, he was not an organizer or administrator; he was not even a sermonizer, in the technical sense; but he *was* a preacher, and he knew it. For thirty-four years his Pauline constancy of purpose never wavered—“This one thing I do.” He had seen the vision and heard the call, and he was not disobedient.

Whitefield had an extraordinary voice; he could adapt it to a dozen people in a private house, and the next moment he could step out of doors and speak to tens of thousands. He never lacked vocal power, and he believed in using it. He once said: “I love those that thunder out the word. The Christian world is in a dead sleep. Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it.” Tradition relates that once when preaching near the river-front in Philadelphia he was heard at Gloucester Point, two miles distant by water; and another time his words carried so distinctly that a man a mile away was converted under the message.

But quality counted far more than mere volume. Whitefield’s enunciation was faultless, every word

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clean-cut as a crystal. And, most of all, he had in its fullness what so many speakers are happy to possess in moderate degree, a melody of utterance that fascinated his hearers. His voice was always under perfect control. Of rich compass, the music passed through the whole diapason, from the song of the bird to the mighty oratund of Niagara's roar. Such a gift was natural, art could never have acquired it. No one knew its worth better than David Garrick. The great actor once said, "I would give a hundred guineas if I could only say 'Oh!' like Mr. Whitefield"; and he remarked to a friend that if Whitefield were on the stage, he could make an audience weep or tremble by his varied utterance of the word "Mesopotamia."

We talk of a "speaking" face. Whitefield's face was a magazine of eloquence. As people watched him they were spellbound, not only by his words but by the extraordinary play of the passions of the soul in his eyes and in every feature. Had he been stricken dumb he could have continued to preach. He was a born actor. We have already seen how fond he was as a schoolboy of engaging in theatrical exhibitions. Many have thought that before the footlights he would have eclipsed Garrick himself. Certain it is that no preacher of his age, if, indeed, of any age, equaled him in histrionic power. He knew the untold value of a good delivery in holding people's attention, and he thought it was no wonder that so many churches in England were empty,



OLD PHILADELPHIA COURT HOUSE



WHITEFIELD'S CHARITY SCHOOL

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when the preachers droned out their sermons in such wretched style. He almost wept as he recalled how the whole subject was ignored at Oxford, and he never ceased to urge the study of oratory in the American colleges.

He himself was a life-long student of the art of public speech. Nature had been very good to him, but that was not enough. In voice, gesture, and general manner he constantly strove to reach perfection. Itinerating as he was, he had the great advantage of being able to use the same sermon over and over. Garrick and Foote were agreed that his oratory was not at its full height till he had repeated a sermon at least forty times. Franklin tells us that "By hearing him often, I came to distinguish easily between sermons newly composed and those he had preached often in the course of his travels. His delivery of the latter was so improved by frequent repetition that every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice was so perfectly tuned and well-placed that, without being interested in the subject, one could not help being pleased with the discourse." Whitefield might easily have run into an artificial style and his histrionic manner have become extremely offensive, had it not been for his utter sincerity and his spiritual passion. With all his attention to the arts of speech he never lost his naturalness. Obedient to the laws of good delivery, he never sacrificed his freedom. *He was always himself*, and yet not him-

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self, for in word and manner he spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. This explains the fact that his sublimest flights were unpremeditated. When he began a sermon, neither he nor his hearers knew to what altitudes the passion of the hour might sweep him. Is not this the soul of eloquence?

He valued good speaking, but he stressed it only as a means toward an end. He was an orator, but far more, he sought to be a prophet. It was his life maxim "to preach as Apelles painted, for *Eternity*." He often repeated Paul's words: "Necessity is laid upon me, and woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" He praised sermons well-delivered and enriched with "rational arguments" and "rhetoric," but "I would as soon go to yonder churchyard and attempt to raise the dead with a 'Come forth!' as to preach to dead souls" if there was no heavenly Power present. The Whitefield of the marvelous voice would have been as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" had it not been for the indwelling unction of the Holy One. His hearers felt it as they listened. Doctor Smalley, when a mere boy, heard him, and he used to relate how "I could not keep my eyes off from him. I saw him in his prayer, his eyes wide open, looking on high; and I certainly thought that he saw the Great Being up there, with whom he was talking and pleading so earnestly." When he came before his auditors he looked like one who had been with God. This it was that won for him the title, "Seraphic."

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Cornelius Winter, a young man converted in Whitefield's later ministry, and for eighteen months an inmate of his London home, was able to observe the great preacher's habits at close range. He tells us that "the time Mr. Whitefield set apart for preparation for the pulpit, during my connection with him, was not distinguished from the time he appropriated to other business. . . . He was never more in retirement on a Saturday than on another day, nor sequestered at any particular time for a period longer than he used for his ordinary devotions. I never met with anything like a skeleton of a sermon among his papers—and I believe he knew nothing of such a kind of exercise as the planning of a sermon."

"Usually for an hour or two before he entered the pulpit he claimed retirement; and, on the Sabbath morning especially, he was accustomed to have Clarke's Bible, Matthew Henry's *Comment*, and Cruden's *Concordance* within his reach. His frame at that time was more than ordinarily devotional."

"His rest was much interrupted, and he often said at the close of an address, 'I got this sermon when most of you were fast asleep.' He made very minute observations; and, in one way or another, the occurrences of the week, or of the day, furnished him with matter for the pulpit. . . . I hardly ever knew him to go through a sermon without weeping, . . . and I have heard him say in the pulpit, 'You blame me for weeping, but how can I

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help it, when you will not weep for yourselves, though your souls are upon the verge of destruction, and, for aught I know, you are hearing your last sermon! ”

Ordinarily, when preaching, he wore a gown, and frequently he used the Prayer Book, but he allowed no formalities to fetter him. He was mighty in extempore prayer. If a pulpit was at hand, good and well; but he was equally at home on a table, a tub, a horseblock, the steps of an inn, the stairs of a windmill, or a bit of rising ground. It was a perpetual wonder as well as delight to his hearers that he never read his sermons, something almost unheard of in those days. Picture Whitefield with eyes glued to a manuscript! He had a very easy flow of language. Friends who heard him many times often remarked that they never knew him to stumble or hesitate for a word. He carried with him a small memorandum book in which he kept a record of sermons preached, date, and text. This shows a total of eighteen thousand for a period of thirty-four years, or about ten a week; but if allowance be made for the intervals when, on account of ill health, he was unable to preach, the weekly average would be considerably greater. Of course this does not take into account the unnumbered times when he gave briefer and less formal exhortations.

Like John Wesley, but with even greater success, he strove never to preach over people's heads.

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His style was adapted to the time and place. At the six o'clock morning hour he was more colloquial; at the later Sunday morning service he dealt largely in doctrinal teaching, while in the afternoon and evening he went on a definite quest for souls. He once said, "I am no great friend to long sermons, long prayers, or long hymns." As to hymns he held true, and in the collection prepared for the London Tabernacle he admitted very few with more than three or four stanzas. But in the matter of sermons—well, it depends upon what is meant by "long." Except in the early morning he usually preached an hour, sometimes twice that. And yet the crowds came. After all, the length of sermons is to be measured more by quality than by quantity.

As has already been said, Whitefield was glad to preach anywhere, and he was often very effective in parlor gatherings; but it required large dimensions to put him at his best. Give him God's out of doors, and a vast multitude of eager listeners, their "souls sitting in their eyes"—then he was supreme. As he so often said, "Mounts are the best pulpits, and heaven the best sounding-board."

When a young man Whitefield had the good sense to make it a life rule "simply to preach the pure gospel, and not to meddle at all with controversy." This not only saved him untold trouble but it added immensely to his pulpit effectiveness. He suited his sermons to the occasion. He preached

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to a society of young women on "Christ the Best Husband." He appealed to an audience of seamen to handle their lives with the same care that they handled the sails. His subjects were timely and practical, such as: "Britain's Duty," "Worldly Business," "Profane Cursing and Swearing," "The Heinous Sin of Drunkenness," "The Best New Year's Gift," "Family Religion," "The Benefits of Early Piety," "The Almost Christian," "Satan's Devices."

His preaching was picturesque and often intensely dramatic. Sometimes in the middle of a sermon he would electrify a crowd with the striking apostrophe used by Jeremiah, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the words of the Lord!" It is said that on one occasion, when he was preaching in the open, this was heard a mile and a half away.

He is speaking on the parable of the Great Supper, with the various excuses made by those who declined the invitation: "The excuse which the third made is worst of all. . . . Why cannot he come? He has 'married a wife.' Has he so? Why, then, by all means he should come. For the supper to which he was invited, as it should seem, was a wedding-supper, and would have saved him the trouble of a nuptial entertainment. It was a great supper, and consequently there was provision enough for him and his bride too. And it was made by a great man, who sent out his servant to bid many, so that he need not have doubted of meet-

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ing with a hearty welcome, though he should bring his wife with him. Or, supposing his wife was unwilling to come, yet as the husband is the head of the wife, he ought to have laid his commands on her to accompany him. For we cannot do better for our yoke-fellows than to bring them to the gospel-feast. Or, supposing after all, she would not be prevailed upon, he ought to have gone without her. Adam paid dear for hearkening to the voice of his wife; and sometimes, unless we forsake wives as well as houses and lands, we cannot be the Lord's disciples."

Whitefield was fond of adding a graphic touch by directly addressing a person, especially a biblical character. Take, for example, the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration: "Peter, when he had drunk a little of Christ's new wine, speaks like a person intoxicated; he was overpowered with the brightness of the manifestation. 'Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.' It is well added, 'not knowing what he said.' That he should cry out, 'Master, it is good for us to be here,' in such good company, and in so glorious a condition, is no wonder; which of us all would not have been apt to have done the same? But to talk of building tabernacles, and one for Christ and one for Moses and one for Elias, was saying something for which Peter himself must stand reprov'd. Surely, Peter, thou wast not quite awake! Thou talkest like one in a dream. If thy

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Lord had taken thee at thy word, what a poor tabernacle wouldst thou have had, in comparison of that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, in which thou hast long since dwelt, now the earthly house of the tabernacle of thy body is dissolved! What! Build tabernacles below, and have the crown before thou hast borne the cross? And why so selfish, Peter? Carest thou not for thy fellow disciples that are below, who came not up with thee to the mount? Carest thou not for the precious souls that are as sheep having no shepherd, and must perish forever unless thy Master descends from the mount to teach and to die for them? Wouldst thou thus eat thy spiritual morsels alone? Besides, if thou art for building tabernacles, why must there be three of them, one for Christ, and one for Moses, and one for Elias? Are Christ and the prophets divided? Do they not sweetly harmonize and agree in one? Alas, how unlike is their conversation to thine! Moses and Elias came down to talk of suffering, and thou art dreaming of building I know not what tabernacles. Surely, Peter, thou art so high upon the mount that thy head runs giddy."

In another sermon we find a characteristic description of Peter's remorse after denying the Master: "Methinks I see him wringing his hands, rending his garments, stamping on the ground, and, with the self-condemned publican, smiting upon his breast. See how it heaves! O what piteous sighs

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and groans are those which come from the very bottom of his heart! Alas! it is too big to speak; but his tears, his briny, bitter, repenting tears, plainly bespeak this to be the language of his awakened soul. 'Alas! where have I been? On the devil's ground. With whom have I been conversing? The devil's children. What is this that I have done? Denied the Lord of glory; with oaths and curses, denied that I ever knew him. And now whither shall I go, or where shall I hide my guilty head? I have sinned against light, I have sinned against repeated tokens of his dear, distinguishing and heavenly love. I have sinned against repeated warnings, resolutions, promises, and vows. I have sinned openly in the face of the sun, and in the presence of my Master's enemies, and thereby have caused his name to be blasphemed. How can I think to be suffered to behold the face of, much less to be employed by, the ever-blessed Jesus any more? O Peter! thou hast undone thyself. Justly mayest thou be thrown aside like a broken vessel. God be merciful to me a sinner!' "

Whitefield made telling use of passing events. Now and then he chanced to be in a town when a criminal had just been tried and sentenced to death. Such an incident strongly appealed to his dramatic instinct, and he promptly took advantage of the popular excitement to reenact the scene at the close of a sermon to obstinate sinners. Having provided himself with a black cap he would take

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the part of the judge. "With his eyes full of tears, and his heart almost too big to admit of speech, he would say, after a momentary pause, 'I am now going to put on my condemning cap. Sinner, I must do it. I must pronounce sentence upon thee.' And then, in a strain of tremendous eloquence, he would recite our Lord's words, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'"¹ Enacted as only Whitefield could do it, the effect was overwhelming.

As has already been said, his sublimest utterances were usually unpremeditated. More than once a thunder-storm furnished the occasion for a thrilling outburst. On a Sunday morning, on his first visit to Boston, he was preaching to a vast throng. "Before he commenced his sermon, long darkening columns crowded the bright, sunny sky, and swept their dull shadows over the buildings, in fearful augury of the storm that was approaching. 'See that emblem of human life,' said he, as he pointed to a flitting shadow. 'It paused for a moment, and concealed the brightness of heaven from our view; but it is gone. And where will you be, my hearers, when your lives are passed away like that dark cloud?' . . . 'O sinner! by all your hopes of happiness, I beseech you to repent. Let not the wrath of God be awakened! Let not the fires of eternity be kindled against you! See there!' said the impassioned preacher, pointing to a flash of

¹ *Winter's Memoirs.*

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lightning, 'It is a glance from the angry eye of Jehovah!' continued he, raising his finger in a listening attitude, as the thunder broke in a tremendous crash, 'it was the voice of the Almighty as he passed by in his anger!' As the sound died away, Whitefield covered his face with his hands, and fell on his knees, apparently lost in prayer. The storm passed rapidly by, and the sun, bursting forth, threw across the heavens the magnificent arch of peace. Rising and pointing to it, the young preacher cried, 'Look upon the rainbow, and praise Him who made it. Very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof. It compasseth the heavens about with glory, and the hands of the Most High have bended it.'"²

When friends requested a copy of this sermon for publication, Whitefield replied, "I have no objection, if you will print the lightning, thunder, and rainbow with it."

It is astonishing and yet not to be wondered at, the way Whitefield gripped the attention of his hearers. A well-known shipbuilder, who was prejudiced against him, and who had refused to go near him, was finally persuaded to attend a service. From the first word to the last his eyes were riveted on the preacher. At the close a friend said to him, "And what did you think of Whitefield?"

"Think!" he exclaimed, "I never heard such a

² Wakeley's *Anecdotes of Whitefield*.

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man in my life. I tell you, sir, every Sunday when I go to church, I can build a ship from stem to stern under the sermon; but, were it to save my soul, under Mr. Whitefield, I could not lay a single plank."

Among the nobility of England there were few who admired the great preacher more than Lord Chesterfield. On one occasion Whitefield "was comparing the benighted sinner to a blind beggar on a dangerous road. His little dog gets away from him when skirting the edge of a precipice, and he is left to explore the path with his ironshod staff. On the very verge of the cliff this blind guide slips through his fingers and skims away down the abyss. All unconscious, the owner stoops down to regain it, and stumbling forward—'Good God, he is gone!' shouted Chesterfield, who had been watching with breathless alarm the blind man's movements, and who jumped to his feet to save the catastrophe."³

Certainly the philosopher, David Hume, was not a man to be easily swayed by any preacher, and yet so fond was he of Whitefield that in a day when traveling was hard he declared that he would go twenty miles to hear him. Hume tells us that he was once present when "Whitefield addressed his audience thus: 'The attendant angel is about to leave us, and ascend to heaven. Shall he ascend and not bear with him the news of one sinner re-

³ Related by the Rev. Dr. James Hamilton, of London.

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claimed from the error of his way?" And then, stamping with his foot, and lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, he cried aloud, 'Stop, Gabriel, stop, ere you enter the sacred portals, and yet carry with you the tidings of one sinner being saved!' This address surpassed anything I ever saw or heard in any other preacher." We cannot help wondering if on that memorable occasion the great infidel was not moved by more than the mere eloquence, moved more deeply, perhaps, than he cared to confess.

We read so much of Whitefield's brilliant pulpit successes that we are apt to infer that he was uniformly triumphant. Not so. He would have been more than human had he always been able to lift his hearers to the mountaintop. He had his failures and many of them. We hear him saying one day, "Preached to a polite auditory, and so very unconcerned that I began to question whether I had been preaching to rational or brute creatures." Very often the people sat before him like "dead stocks." No doubt at times the "atmosphere" was unfriendly, but we gravely suspect that more than once the fault was in the pulpit rather than in the pew. Like other preachers, Whitefield could be dull, and when he was dull, the inevitable followed—he lost the crowd. Now and then he used drastic means to gain the mastery. One Sunday "a young man, a member of the College [Princeton], hearing that Whitefield was to preach in the neighborhood, and being more than a little anxious to ascer-

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tain whether he really deserved all the celebrity he enjoyed, went to hear him. The day was very rainy and the audience was small; the preacher, accustomed to address thousands, did not feel his power called forth as at other times. After having heard about one third part of the sermon the young man said to himself, 'This man is not so great a wonder after all—quite commonplace and superficial—nothing but show, and not a great deal of that'; and looking round upon the audience, he saw that they appeared about as uninterested as usual, and that old Father ——, who sat directly in front of the pulpit, and who always went to sleep after hearing the text and plan of the sermon, was enjoying his accustomed nap. About this time Whitefield stopped. His face went rapidly through many changes, till it looked more like a rising thunder-cloud than anything else; and beginning very deliberately, he said: 'If I had come to speak to you in my own name, you might rest your elbows upon your knees, and your heads upon your hands, and sleep; and once in a while look up and say, "What does the babbler talk of?" But I have not come to you in my own name. No, I have come to you in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, and'—here he brought down his hand and foot at once, so as to make the whole house ring—'and I must and will be heard!' Everyone in the house started, and old Father —— among the rest. 'Aye, aye,' continued the preacher, looking at him, 'I have waked you

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up, have I? I meant to do it. I am not come here to preach to stocks and stones; I am come to you in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, and I must and I will have an audience.' The congregation was fully aroused, and the remaining part of the sermon produced a considerable effect."⁴

No man could preach as Whitefield did without paying the price. Often after leaving the pulpit he vomited blood, and those who knew him intimately tell us that "after a preaching paroxysm, he lay panting on his couch, spent, breathless, and death-like." And yet he always contended, and probably he was right, that this pulpit exercise was in the end a physical benefit. He called preaching his "grand catholicon"—the remedy for every ailment. Whitefield's sermons read poorly, and it is not surprising. All told, he prepared sixty-three for the press, and of these at least forty-six were written before he was twenty-five years of age. It is to these early efforts, chiefly, that we turn to form an estimate of the man's thought and style; and as we read we marvel that they so enraptured the people who heard them. It would not especially improve matters if we had all of his sermons before us, for the truth is that no preacher ever lived who was so poorly revealed in type as was he. Alas, that no art can print "the lightning, thunder, and rainbow"! The world does not know, nor can it know, the real *Whitefield the Preacher*. The surpassing

⁴ Belcher's *Life of Whitefield*, p. 376.

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voice, the eloquent face, the form that spoke in every motion, the living personality that glowed with celestial fire—all this has passed away forever, and we must depend on cold tradition. No doubt it would be better for Whitefield's reputation if none of his sermons had been printed. Even Franklin, who was eager to publish them as a business proposition, and whose presses were kept busy trying to meet the demand, more than once admitted that they did the writer no credit. And yet, in spite of their mediocre character, they were used of God in blessing a multitude of lives. They circulated widely on both sides of the Atlantic. They were read by individuals, by families, and in larger circles, and they carried the message to many who could never have been reached by the living voice.

Take a single example. In those early times, religion in the colony of Virginia was at a very low ebb. A young layman, Samuel Morris, became burdened with the need of a revival, and he longed to help. One day, in 1743, there fell into his hands a volume of Whitefield's sermons. Here was his chance. He could not preach but he could read, and calling his neighbors to his own house he began reading to them these sermons. The effect was immediate. He tells us that "the concern of some of the people was now so passionate and violent that they could not avoid crying out and weeping bitterly. My dwelling house became too small to contain the congregation, and we determined to



WHITEFIELD'S FIELD-PULPIT

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build a meetinghouse, merely for reading." This led to the introduction of Presbyterianism and to its spread all over the colony. It marked the dawn of a new religious day.

The question is often asked, "Would Whitefield's preaching produce the same impression now that it did in the eighteenth century?" No, if what is meant is a mere transference of sermons and delivery from that generation to this, any more than the Whitefield style of dress would be regarded with favor to-day. Times change, and while truth remains the same, forms and expression are altered. But is it not fair to assume that, since Whitefield was so successful in adapting himself to the age in which he lived, he would be no less able to fit into the needs of the twentieth century? Doubtless some parts of his message would receive a new theological setting, and his pulpit language and manner might be modified. But, given the same prophetic vision with the same glad obedience to that vision, the same extraordinary qualities and gifts of heart and mind and body, the same world of sin and sorrow, only immensely bigger and more conscious of its need—may we not suppose that God would make as large use of his servant in these days as nearly two hundred years ago? At all events, we wish that Whitefield were here; we would like to see what would happen.

CHAPTER XI
WHITEFIELD THE MAN

Dare to be singularly good.

Why should we be dwarfs in holiness?

There is not a thing on the face of the earth that I
abhor so much as idleness or idle people.

I expect to see you once more in this land of the dying.
If not, ere long I shall meet you in the land of the living.

CHAPTER XI

WHITEFIELD THE MAN

WHITEFIELD was a most lovable man, warm-hearted, generous, frank; with no trace of a revengeful spirit. If he made some enemies, he won ten times as many friends; and what is more, he clung to his friends and they clung to him; he would have perished without them; he feasted on human love. He was fond of America, and at the call of duty he never hesitated to turn his face westward; and yet one of the keenest trials of his life was the parting from dear ones in the homeland. On an early voyage, as the shores of England faded from his view, he wrote these words: "Parting seasons of late have been to me dying seasons. Surely they have broken my very heart." He said to a friend, "In parting from you, I feel that I am being executed again and again." Once when he was about to sail, several intimate companions sent word they would be at the ship to see him off. But he begged them not to do so: "I dare not meet you now. I cannot bear your coming to me to part from me. It cuts me to the heart."

He was impulsive, and he had quarrels, many of them, but, like his faults in general, they involved the head rather than the heart. If in the wrong, he

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was prompt to seek forgiveness, and he was ready to go almost any length to heal a breach. Long-continued enmity was a grief of soul to him, and he did his best to avoid it. No doubt he was thinking of what he himself had often done in the counsel which he urged on an English gentleman: "My very dear Sir, do forgive and forget; and if you are conscious you have been too hasty in any respect, pray send to Mr. B—— a few lines of love. We never lose anything by stooping."

Those were disputatious times, and Whitefield was embroiled in all manner of theological controversies, especially in his early ministry. In the single year 1739, more than forty pamphlets were published against him. Partisan meddlers egged him on to more than one needless tilt. Nothing seemed to gratify them more than to cause trouble between Whitefield and some intimate friend. There was no person in the world to whom he owed so much in the way of spiritual leadership as to John Wesley, a man eleven years his senior and of mature Christian experience. And yet, when a young fellow of only twenty-six, because of certain doctrinal differences, he broke off all relations with Wesley, refusing even to give him his hand. However, these were mere outbursts of youthful folly. The breach was soon healed, and the friendship was never again disturbed. Some years later, when Wesley lay very sick and it was feared he might not live, one of the tenderest letters he received was



GEORGE WHITEFIELD, M.A.

From a portrait by

John Wainwright

WHITEFIELD IN 1768

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from Whitefield, closing with the words, "Your most affectionate, sympathizing, and afflicted younger brother." Knowing that the two men disagreed on certain points of doctrine, a zealous partisan of Whitefield asked him one day, "Do you think we shall see John Wesley in heaven?"

"No, sir!" was the prompt reply. "He will be so near the throne and we at such a distance that we shall hardly get a sight of him."

When Whitefield began his ministry, to all intents he was an Arminian, but a year or two later he announced he was a Calvinist. Contact with Presbyterianism in Scotland and America led to the change, and in one way it was a practical help, for on both sides of the sea it gave him a ready hearing in a multitude of circles where Wesley would have been looked upon as a heretic. And yet all through life he preached universal salvation with an abandon that, in those days, must have startled the strict disciples of the great Genevan.

The fact is, as we have seen, Whitefield was not a theologian, and it is unlikely that he ever thought through a system of theology. But with all his soul he believed in the glory of God, and Calvinism's special emphasis on this point appealed to him. He was ready, eager, to sink to any depth of abasement and carry humanity with him, in the effort to magnify Deity. He wrote to a friend: "I hope we shall catch fire from each other and that there may be an holy emulation amongst us, who

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shall most debase man and exalt the Lord Jesus." As Franklin observed, one of his frequent expressions was, "Man is half a beast and half a devil." Over and over again he described himself as "a worm and no man," "a dead dog," "a vile, worthless, ungrateful wretch," "a sink of sin and corruption." His bitterest foes never hurled at him more opprobrious epithets than he applied to himself. Evidently, he believed that the surest way to honor the Creator was to dishonor the creature.

But whatever Whitefield's ideas on these points, or however closely held, be it said to his credit that he rarely if ever preached them in a controversial spirit. His theology was not of the militant kind, and as the years passed he increasingly abhorred disputing for disputing's sake. "We do not dispute," he said, "but love. I find more and more that truth is great, and however seemingly crushed for a while, will in the end prevail"; and as he wrote in one of his beautiful letters to Benjamin Franklin, "Though we cannot agree in principles, yet we agree in love."

Whitefield was remarkably broad and tolerant in his church sympathies. To the close of his life he was a regular priest of the Anglican communion, and had he been permitted, no doubt the great bulk of his work would have been done in that body. In reality it was a Divine Hand that thrust him out. Like the founder of Methodism, he was too big for any single branch; he belonged to the Church Uni-

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versal. The oft-quoted expression, "I look upon all the world as my parish," was used for the first time by both Wesley and Whitefield in letters written in the same year, 1739.

When Whitefield was refused admission to Episcopal pulpits he turned to the Dissenters, who, as a rule, welcomed him with open arms. This change was especially easy in America, with its freer spirit and its strong nonconforming bodies. Without surrendering in any measure his place and standing in the church of his ordination, through most of his life he was virtually a Dissenting minister; and yet, as we have seen, he belonged to the whole church. He used to exclaim: "Oh, for a mind divested of all sects, and names, and parties! I care not if the name of George Whitefield be banished out of the world so that Jesus be exalted in it." He made it his life aim "to strengthen the hands of all, of every denomination that preaches Jesus Christ in sincerity." He never uttered nobler words than when he said, in one of his sermons, "The Spirit of God is the center of unity, and wherever I see the image of my Master I never inquire of them their opinions. I love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ."

Such catholicity of soul may be common in these days, but it was undreamed of before the Evangelical Revival. Whitefield was far in advance of the times. Even Wesley, with all his breadth of sympathy, scarcely kept pace with him at this point.

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Whitefield felt at home anywhere. Among churchmen he was a churchman; among the Presbyterians and the other Dissenters of Scotland and America, he was a Dissenter. The holy communion was as sacred to him with one group as with another. He disagreed with the Quakers in some things, but he tells of his gleeful accord with the Friend who grasped his hand at the close of a sermon, saying: "Friend George, I am as thou art. I am for bringing all to the life and power of the ever-living God. And therefore, if thou wilt not quarrel with me about my hat, I will not quarrel with thee about thy gown." One Sunday he invited a Baptist minister to preach in his stead, joyfully commenting to himself, "O bigotry, thou art tumbling down apace!" The story is still told in Philadelphia of how, on a certain occasion, when Whitefield was preaching from the balcony of the old Courthouse, he lifted his eyes and exclaimed: "Father Abraham, who have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians? 'No.' Any Presbyterians? 'No.' Any Baptists? 'No.' Any Methodists, Seceders, or Independents? 'No, no!' Why, who have you there? 'We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians.' Oh, is that the case? Then, God help me! And God help us all to forget party names, and to become Christians in deed and truth."

The hardest struggle Whitefield had, all through life, but especially as a young man, was to hold his balance amid the tide of adulation that swept

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around him. Anyone would have felt it, and especially a person of Whitefield's emotional nature. Often he fell, and no one knew it better than himself. There is a pathetic note in his voice as he frankly says, "It is too much for one man to be received as I have been, by thousands." He lamented his "too imperious carriage," and that a love of power had sometimes "intoxicated" him, and made him "mistake passion for zeal, and an overbearing spirit for an authority given from above." No offender could have been more penitent than he, more humble in confession, more desirous of mending his ways. "I have been much concerned," he said to a fellow clergyman, "lest I behave not with that humility toward you which is due from a babe to a father in Christ. You know how difficult it is to meet with success and not be puffed up with it. Pray the Lord to heal my pride." In letter after letter, with childlike simplicity, he pleaded with his friends, "Entreat God to give me humility, so shall success not prove my ruin." Once, receiving a severe rebuke, instead of resenting it, he meekly thanked the writer, and added: "When I am unwilling to be told of my faults, correspond with me no more. If I know anything of this treacherous heart of mine, I love those most who are most faithful to me in this respect." At times his enemies were unmerciful, brutal, in their assaults, but he quietly accepted it. "God be praised for the many strippings I have met with. It is good for me that

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I have been supplanted, despised, censured, maligned." It was a valuable discipline.

But because Whitefield showed proper humility, let no one suppose there was the faintest trace of a cringing spirit; his whole attitude was one of robust independence. Some one took him to task on the ground that he paid too much attention to his dress. "Alas!" he replied, "I myself thought once that Christianity required me to go nasty. I neglected myself as much as you would have me; but when God gave me the spirit of adoption, I then dressed *decently*, as you call it, out of principle." When a clergyman wrote him, impertinently asking to be informed how often he prayed and prescribing certain rules, Whitefield replied: "Morning and evening retirement is certainly exceeding good; but if through weakness of body, or frequency of preaching, I cannot go to God in my usual set time, I think my spirit is not in bondage. It is not for me to tell how often I use secret prayer." As a matter of fact, it was often, but he was not given to long prayers, nor did he like them from others. One day, when visiting at the home of a friend, the friend prayed so long that Whitefield got off his knees and sat down in a chair. At the close of the prayer, he exclaimed, "Sir, you prayed me into a good frame, and you prayed me out of it again."

Cornelius Winter, the young man quoted in the preceding chapter, who in the closing part of

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Whitefield's life was an inmate of the London home, eating at the same table and sleeping in the same room with the great preacher, has left us an account of some of the personal habits of his master: "Mr. Whitefield was accessible but to few. He was cautious in admitting people to him. He would never be surprised into a conversation. You could not knock at his door and be allowed to enter at any time. 'Who is it?' 'What is his business?' and such-like inquiries usually preceded admission; and, if admission was granted, it was then: 'Come to-morrow morning at six o'clock, perhaps five, or immediately after preaching. If later, I cannot see you.' "

"No time was to be wasted, and his expectations usually went before the ability of his servants to perform his commands. He was very exact to the time appointed for his stated meals. A few minutes' delay would be considered a great fault. He was irritable, but soon appeased. Not being patient enough, one day, to receive a reason for his being disappointed, he hurt the mind of one who was studious to please; but, on reflection, he burst into tears, saying, 'I shall live to be a poor, peevish old man, and everybody will be tired of me.' " This irritability of temper grew upon him in the later years of his life. Doubtless it was due in large measure to persistent ill health, but it was a grief of soul to him. With touching candor he said: "I have nothing to disturb my joy in God but the dis-

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order of my passions; were these once brought into proper subjection to divine grace, well would it be with me and happy should I be. But so long as I am angry with trifles, and throw myself into needless disorders, so long must my heart be like the troubled sea, and so long must I consequently be unhappy.”

Winter goes on to tell us: “He never commanded haughtily, and always took care to applaud when a person did right. He never indulged parties at his table, but a select few might now and then breakfast with him, dine with him on a Sunday, or sup with him on Wednesday night. In the last-mentioned indulgence he was scrupulously exact to break up in time. In the height of a conversation I have known him to abruptly say, ‘But we forget ourselves’; and, rising from his seat and advancing to the door, would add, ‘Come, gentlemen, it is time for all good folks to be at home!’ ”

“Whether only by himself, or having but a second, his table must be spread elegantly, though it produced but a loaf and a cheese. He was unjustly charged with being given to appetite. His table was never spread with variety. A cow-heel was his favorite dish, and I have known him cheerfully say, ‘How surprised would the world be, if they could peep upon Doctor Squintum, and see a cow-heel upon his table.’ He was extremely neat in his person, and in everything about him. Not a paper must be out of place, or be put up irregularly.

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Each part of the furniture, likewise, must be in its proper position before he retired to rest. He said he did not think he should die easy, if he thought his gloves were not where they ought to be. There was no rest after four in the morning, nor sitting up after ten in the evening."

"He never made a purchase without paying the money immediately. He often dined among his friends, and usually connected a comprehensive prayer with his thanksgiving when the table was dismissed, in which he noticed particular cases relative to the family. He never protracted his visit long after dinner. He often appeared tired of popularity, and said he almost envied the man who could take his choice of food at an eating-house, and pass unnoticed."

Whitefield's mother died in 1752, while he was absent in America. She was a woman of ordinary parts, but she loved her son, and in his younger days she did for him her very best. He in turn showed her the most beautiful devotion. At one time he felt worried about her religious condition, and he wrote to her very tenderly, "When you come to judgment, God will show you how many tears I have shed in secret for you. Honored mother, flee to Jesus!" At a later date he wrote, "How does my heart burn with love and duty! Gladly would I wash your aged^d feet, and lean upon your neck, and weep and pray till I could pray no more." And he sends her "ten thousand hearty and most humble

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thanks" for all she had done for him. Happy the mother of such a son!

Whitefield was married in November, 1741, a few days before his twenty-seventh birthday. He had been considering the matter for nearly two years. His orphanage in Savannah was in need of a trustworthy woman to act as matron, and he thought a wife would meet the situation.

More than a year and a half before he was finally wedded he took definite steps looking in that direction. He selected a young woman who he thought would do, and then he proposed in a very businesslike way. He wrote to the parents, outlining his plans, and asking if they felt their daughter was a proper person for such an undertaking; and in case it met with their approval, they were to pass on to her a letter bearing a definite proposal of marriage. He added: "You need not be afraid of sending me a refusal; for, I bless God, if I know anything of my own heart, I am free from that foolish passion which the world calls *love*. I write, only because I believe it is the will of God that I should alter my state; but your denial will fully convince me that your daughter is not the person appointed by God for me." In his letter to the girl he plainly told her of the fatigue that would be involved in taking "charge of a family, consisting perhaps of a hundred persons," the "inclemencies of the air," the long periods of separation when her husband would be on his journeys, and then he

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asked her if she would accept him. Needless to say that the odd wooings of the young suitor were promptly turned down. The woman whom he did marry was a widow and ten years his senior. It has generally been supposed that the venture turned out unhappily, but this is not true. Mrs. Whitefield was an estimable person, and the soul of loyalty to her companion through the twenty-seven years of their wedded life. Very wisely, the orphanage plan, for the most part, was discarded, but occasionally she accompanied her husband on his travels both in this country and in England. In many ways she was a genuine helpmeet. In his letters he refers to her most tenderly, as when he says, "My wife and I go on like two happy pilgrims, leaning on our Beloved." There is recorded not a single unpleasant word between them. She died two years before her husband, and he preached her funeral sermon in London. He told what a blessing she had been to him; and then described in particular an experience when he was preaching in the field and the crowd was disposed to be riotous: "At first I addressed them firmly; but when a desperate gang drew near, and with the most ferocious and horrid imprecations and menaces, my courage began to fail. My wife was then standing behind me, as I stood on the table. I think I hear her now. She pulled my gown, and looking up, said, 'George, play the man for your God.' My confidence returned. I spoke to the multitude with boldness and

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affection. They became still, and many were deeply affected."

With scarcely an exception, the biographers of Whitefield have expressed regret that he ever married. Doubtless the experience was not ideal; the utilitarian may have been too prominent; the joy of marriage-fellowship was marred by the frequent and prolonged separations of husband and wife. And yet, we cannot help feeling that the whole life of the man was ennobled and made richer, by entering into a relationship which for him had a sacramental value; by the coming of a little son, "trailing clouds of glory," albeit the tarrying was for only a few short weeks; and by the consciousness, wherever he went, on land and sea, that there was one who was praying for him, and to whom he was knit by holy ties till death them should part. It may be said with absolute confidence that Whitefield's moral character was above reproach. Probably no man of his day met more women of every description and under every circumstance, and yet his bitterest foes knew there was one point where it was useless to assail him; he had a white soul.

CHAPTER XII
WHITEFIELD TRIUMPHANT

I would fain die sword in hand.

O that death may find me either praying or preaching!

Sudden death is sudden glory.

Among Christians, death has not only lost its sting,
but its name.

The moment I leave the body, and plunge into the
world of spirits, the first question I shall ask will be—
Where's my Saviour?



WHITEFIELD'S LAST PORTRAIT

CHAPTER XII

WHITEFIELD TRIUMPHANT

THE closing years of Whitefield's life brought trials as well as joys. His enemies seemed to conspire in publishing the most venomous attacks; and as if this were not enough, the stage took up the assault. In his preaching there was so much of the actor's art that he laid himself peculiarly open to mimicry. At one time, in America, a club of young rakes had a Negro servant who was very clever in impersonating various characters. Whitefield happened to be in town and, as usual, was creating a great stir. At a meeting of the club the members called on the servant to mimic the preacher; at first he refused, but, being urged, he sprang on a table, and in perfect imitation of voice and manner, cried, "I speak the truth in Christ; I lie not; unless you repent, you will all be damned!" The effect was so startling that it not only broke up the meeting but disrupted the club.

Unhappily, the attacks were not always as harmless. In 1760, Samuel Foote, the English comedian, brought out "The Minor," a burlesque of Whitefield and his followers. It ran for ten years and was acted even after Whitefield's death. It was filthy and profane in the extreme, but White-

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field ignored it. Only twice in his letters does he make a passing allusion, as when he says: "Satan is angry. I am now mimicked and burlesqued on the public stage. All hail such contempt." Other plays, though less important, were written against him, but decent people, foes as well as friends, were disgusted, and Whitefield came through the trial a positive gainer.

His health was never robust, and, unlike Wesley, he did not know how to take care of it. The marvel is that with a comparatively frail body, he was able to do so prodigious a work. But it was a constant struggle, and as the years passed, the collapses became increasingly frequent and serious. More than once the papers reported that he was dead, the first time when he was a young man of only thirty-three. For months at a time he was almost entirely laid aside, and on several occasions it was feared the end was at hand. When he sailed for America at the age of thirty-six he was so broken that his friends in the homeland never expected to see him again. In his letters are constant references to "convulsions and fevers" and other ailments. Repeatedly, to the dismay of his friends, he left a sick-bed to appear in the pulpit. Though with the look of a dying man, he would preach with great power, and after a brief rest they would lift him to the back of his horse, and he would ride on to another point where he knew the crowds were expecting him. One morning in London Wesley

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breakfasted with him, and afterward spoke of him as "an old, old man, fairly worn out in his Master's service, though he has hardly seen fifty years."

As a young man his figure was quite slim, but about the age of forty he rapidly put on flesh. This was not due to indulgence of appetite, but it was a symptom of advancing disease. "I see the disease," he wrote, "but know not how to come at a cure. I dread a corpulent body, but it breaks in upon me like an armed man."

No doubt his imperfect health was in part responsible for a lifelong and almost morbid habit of talking about death, and an apparent longing for it to come. His letters are full of the subject. As a young fellow of twenty-four we find him writing, "I want to leap my seventy years." Ejaculations, such as, "Fly, fly, O time! Welcome, welcome, long-wished-for eternity!" were often on his lips. He used to say that the hope of bringing more souls to Christ was the only consideration that reconciled him to life. One day, in company with several other ministers, Whitefield was dining with his old friend, the Rev. William Tennent, in the parsonage in Freehold, New Jersey. After dinner, as often happened, Whitefield expressed his joy at the thought of soon dying and being admitted into heaven; and, then, appealing to the ministers present, he asked if his joy was shared by them. Generally they assented, but Tennent continued silent. "Brother Tennent," said White-

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field, "you are the oldest man among us; do you not rejoice that your being called home is so near at hand?" "I have no wish about it," bluntly answered Tennent. Whitefield pressed his question, and Tennent again replied: "No, sir, it is no pleasure to me at all; and, if you know your duty, it would be none to you. I have nothing to do with death. My business is to live as *long* as I can, and as *well* as I can." Whitefield was not satisfied, and a third time urged the good old man to state whether he would not choose to die, if death were left to his own choice. "Sir," answered Tennent, "I have no choice about it. I am God's servant and have engaged to do his business as long as he pleases to continue me therein. But now, Brother Whitefield, let me ask you a question. What do you think I would say, if I were to send my man Tom into the field to plow, and if at noon I should find him lounging under a tree and complaining, 'Master, the sun is hot, and the plowing hard, and I am weary of my work, and overdone with heat; do, master, let me go home and rest'? What would I say? Why, that he was a lazy fellow, and that it was his business to do the work I had appointed him, until I should think fit to call him home."¹ No doubt Whitefield was impressed by this frank rebuke from his faithful friend; and it is equally certain that those gathered at the dinner table that

¹ Tyerman's *Life of Whitefield*, 2:590. The incident is taken from the *Evangelical Magazine* of 1807.



OLD TENNENT CHURCH



OLD TENNENT PARSONAGE

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day vividly recalled the incident, when, two months later, word came that the Master's call had been received and the great preacher had gone home.

On September 4, 1769, Whitefield embarked for America on his thirteenth and last voyage. With his roving nature, unless hindered by ill health, he must be constantly on the move, somewhere. As he used to say, "No nestling, no nestling on this side Jordan"; "A pilgrim life to me is the sweetest on this side eternity." But he was especially anxious to revisit America at this time. He had not been there for more than four years, and business connected with the orphanage demanded his personal attention.

His general plan was to go to Georgia, spend several months there, placing the orphan work on a broader and safer basis; journey leisurely northward, meeting a host of old-time friends; back once more to Savannah, and then a last farewell, returning to England to remain.

Before embarking at London he spoke closing words of counsel to his own people in the Tottenham Court Road Chapel and in the old Moorfields Tabernacle, but as usual, he shunned private farewells. Writing to one whom he called "My very dear, steady old friend," he said, "Talk not of taking a personal leave. You know my make. Paul could stand a whipping, but not a weeping farewell."

The voyage was long and tempestuous, and it

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was December before Whitefield reached Georgia. In this connection we find a most singular coincidence. At the Methodist Conference held in Leeds, in August, 1769, an appeal was read by John Wesley from the little company of Methodists in America, that some one be sent over to shepherd them. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor volunteered to go; and at the very time that Whitefield was sailing west for the last time, bringing his ministry to a close, another ship was bearing thither these two young missionaries on their first voyage, to officially found Methodism on American soil.

The winter months of 1770 were spent in Georgia, and in the spring Whitefield started northward, arriving in Philadelphia May 6, and slowly pushed on to New England. His journey was a triumphal progress; old-time differences were forgotten; everywhere he was received with enthusiasm; churches of all names threw open their doors in welcome, and he could not begin to accept all the preaching calls that poured in. One day such a huge pile of letters lay on his table that he sent the bundle to England as a curiosity.

Homes that were privileged to entertain him felt signally honored. On all these occasions he was the oracle to whom every one gave heed. One day he dined with a New Jersey family, where among those present was a young man of twenty-two, by the name of William White, years afterward distinguished as the first bishop of the Protestant

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Episcopal Church in America. The youth never forgot that day and how, all through the meal, his eyes were riveted on the visitor. "During dinner," he tells us, Whitefield "was almost the only speaker, as was said to be common; all present being disposed to listen."

The entire month of July was spent on a preaching tour between New York and Albany. As he sailed up the Hudson the scenery delighted him; again and again he exclaimed, "O Thou wonder-working God!" This was a happy summer for him; his health was so much better that he was able to preach every day, and constant fellowship with loving friends was an unspeakable comfort.

On July 31 he left New York by water for Newport, and then passed overland to Boston, preaching on the way. Everywhere the same joyful greeting awaited him. For three days in the middle of September he was too sick to preach, but at the first possible moment he was again in the pulpit.

The last letter he ever wrote, addressed to a friend in London, was dated September 23, 1770, only seven days before his death. The colonies, and especially New England, were having serious trouble with the mother country over the question of taxation. Whitefield's sympathies were chiefly with the Americans, which explains an opening reference: "Poor New England is much to be pitied; Boston people most of all. How falsely misrepresented! I was so ill on Friday, that I

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could not preach, though thousands were waiting to hear. Well, the day of release will shortly come, but it does not seem yet, for, by riding sixty miles, I am better, and hope to preach here to-morrow. . . . O for a warm heart! O to stand fast in the faith, to quit ourselves like men, to be strong!"

On Saturday, September 29, he left Portsmouth, New Hampshire, for Newburyport, Massachusetts, where he had promised to preach the following morning. At the last moment he agreed to stop at Exeter and deliver a sermon in the open air. He was especially fond of this town, for he remembered how once when he was holding a service there, a man came, his pockets loaded with stones, and bent on mischief. But at the close of the sermon he went to the preacher in tears, "Sir," said he, "I came here to-day with the intention of breaking your head, but God has given me a broken heart." As he was starting from Portsmouth, a friend said to him, "Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." "True, sir," Whitefield replied, and then, clasping his hands and looking up, he said: "Lord Jesus, I am weary *in* thy work, but not *of* thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for thee once more in the fields, seal thy truth, and come home and die."

His prayer was answered; strength was given him for the Exeter sermon, the last he ever preached. No building could hold the crowd, and so mounting a hogshead he spoke in the open. One

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who was present described the scene: "The subject was 'Faith and Works.' He rose up sluggishly and wearily, as if worn down and exhausted by his stupendous labors. His face seemed bloated, his voice was hoarse, his enunciation heavy. Sentence after sentence was thrown off in rough, disjointed portions, without much regard to point or beauty. At length his mind kindled, and his lionlike voice roared to the extremities of his audience. He was speaking of the insufficiency of works to merit salvation, and suddenly cried out in a tone of thunder, 'Works! Works! a man get to heaven by works! I would as soon think of climbing to the moon on a rope of sand!'"

Whenever Whitefield got under way in preaching, physical weakness was forgotten. On this last occasion, though scarcely able to stand when he arose, he was filled with such divine energy that he spoke for two hours; but he had a presentiment that the end was not far distant. As he was closing he cried: "I go, I go to rest prepared; my sun has arisen, and, by aid from heaven, has given light to many. It is now about to set for—no, it is about to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. I have outlived many on earth, but they cannot outlive me in heaven. Oh, thought divine! I soon shall be in a world where time, age, pain, and sorrow are unknown. My body fails, my spirit expands. How willingly I would live forever to preach Christ! But I die to be *with* him."

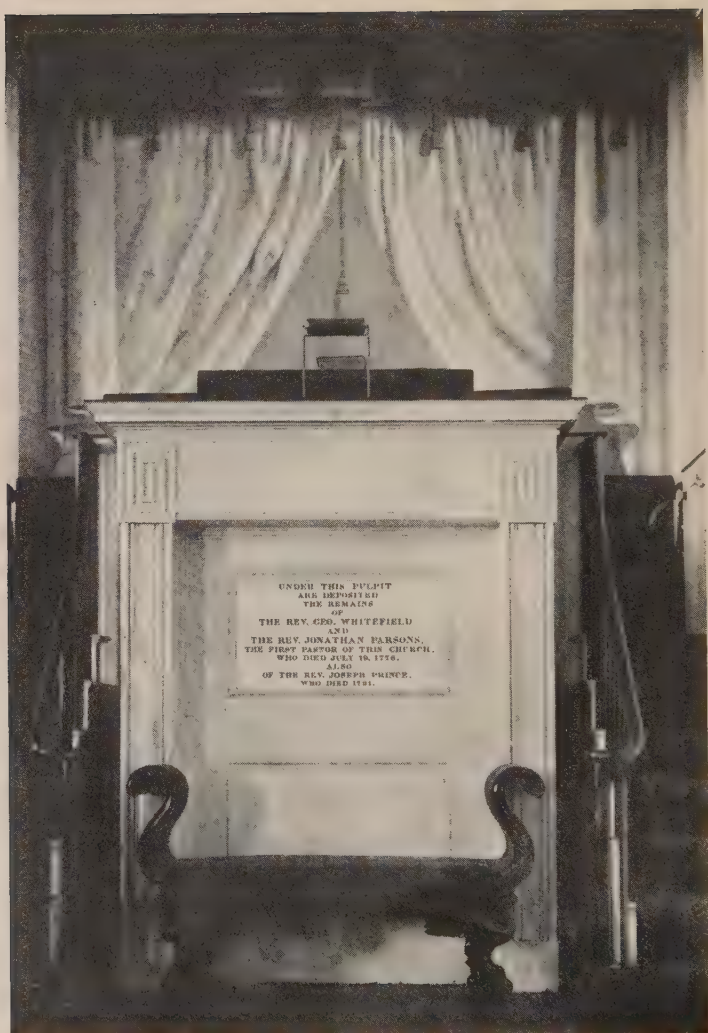
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Immediately on reaching Newburyport he went to the parsonage of the Presbyterian church, where he was to be the guest of his beloved friend, the Rev. Jonathan Parsons. He was utterly exhausted, and after an early supper he excused himself and started for his room. But in the meantime it had been noised about that he was there, and many had gathered in front of the house and were even pressing into the hallway, who, as they caught sight of the great preacher, begged him for a short message. Spent as he was, he paused on the stairs for a moment, candle in hand, and spoke a word of exhortation, and then he went to his chamber.

Mr. Richard Smith, who accompanied him from England and who was with him to the end, describes the last scene. Whitefield awoke at two in the morning in great distress: "He panted for want of breath. I asked him how he felt. He answered, 'My asthma is returning; I must have two or three days' rest. Two or three days' riding without preaching, will set me up again.' Though the window had been half up all night, he asked me to put it a little higher. 'I cannot breathe,' said he, 'but I hope I shall be better by and by. A good pulpit sweat to-day may give me relief. I shall be better after preaching.' I said to him, I wished he would not preach so often. He replied, 'I had rather wear out than rust out.' He then sat up in bed and prayed that God would bless his preaching



OLD SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWBURYPORT, MASS.



UNDER THIS PULPIT
ARE DEPOSITED
THE REMAINS
OF
THE REV. GEO. WHITEFIELD
AND
THE REV. JONATHAN PARSONS,
THE FIRST PASTOR OF THIS CHURCH,
WHO DIED JULY 18, 1756.
ALSO
OF THE REV. JOSEPH PRINCE,
WHO DIED 1781.

PULPIT IN OLD SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWBURYPORT

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where he had been, and also bless his preaching that day, that more souls might be brought to Christ. He then lay down to sleep again," but awoke, suffocating. "He turned to me and said, 'I am dying.' I said, 'I hope not, sir.' He ran to the other window, panting for breath, but could get no relief. I went for Dr. Sawyer, and on coming back I saw death on his face. . . . When the doctor came and felt his pulse, he said, 'He is a dead man'—and indeed so it proved, for he fetched but one gasp, stretched out his feet, and breathed no more. This was exactly at six o'clock" on Sunday morning, September 30, 1770.

Several years prior to this, Whitefield was dining one day at the home of President Finley, of Princeton. "Mr. Whitefield," said the doctor, "I hope it will be very long before you are called home; but when that event shall arrive I shall be glad to hear the noble testimony you will bear for God." "You will be disappointed," was the reply. "I shall die silent. It has pleased God to enable me to bear so many testimonies for him during my life, that he will require none from me when I die." And so it was. He left no dying message; none was needed. His whole life was an eloquent testimony to the divine power to save and to keep.

Amid the tolling of the bells, and with the flags on the ships in the harbor at mourning, the funeral was held on Tuesday, October 2. Preachers came from every direction. Thousands of people stood

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in the street, unable to enter the church. The Rev. Daniel Rogers, one of Whitefield's converts, offered the prayer, and when he came to a point where he exclaimed, "O my Father! My Father!" he broke down and sobbed like a child. The whole audience was in tears. Whitefield was peculiarly interested in this church at Newburyport, with which he had been associated from its beginning, and more than once had expressed the desire that should he pass away in that vicinity, he be buried beneath the pulpit. His wish was carried out, and his body was placed in a newly prepared brick vault.

The news of the death of this mighty servant of the Lord carried sorrow throughout the land and beyond the sea. Boston bowed in mourning; the tolling of the muffled bells of Old Christ Episcopal Church expressed something of the grief that Philadelphia felt. Nowhere was the anguish more bitter than at the orphanage in Georgia: father, guide, protector was gone; the loss was irreparable.

"The melancholy news," as Wesley called it, reached England on November 5. Whitefield's bosom friend, Robert Keen, of London, once asked him: "If you should die abroad, whom shall we get to preach your funeral sermon? Must it be your old friend, the Rev. Mr. John Wesley?" At once Whitefield replied, "He is the man." The choice was ideal. Except for a few months when relations were strained, the two men had been close and

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loving friends for thirty-seven years. No one in the world understood Whitefield as did Wesley; he knew his limitations and he rejoiced in his strength. He used to say: "I praise God for his wisdom in giving different talents to different preachers, and particularly for his giving Mr. Whitefield the talents which I have not." The funeral service was held on November 18, in the Whitefield Chapel in Tottenham Court Road, and as one would expect, Wesley's sermon did affectionate and discriminating justice to the memory of his friend. Scores of memorial sermons were preached all over England as well as in America, and the press was full of accounts of the man whom even his critics recognized as one of the most extraordinary preachers in the history of the church.

The biographer of John Wesley can close his narrative by pointing to world-wide Methodism, as the visitor to Saint Paul's Cathedral is bidden to *look about him* if he would see the monument of the great architect. Not so with Whitefield. He organized no societies, he founded no denomination. God called Wesley to one type of work and Whitefield to another, and happily both men knew it. Whitefield was not an administrator. "The care of all the churches," which came naturally to Wesley as it did to Paul, would have been an impossible task for him. Rather, like the Baptist, he was a "Voice"—and what a Voice! In him the ancient prophets lived again, those fearless forth-tellers of

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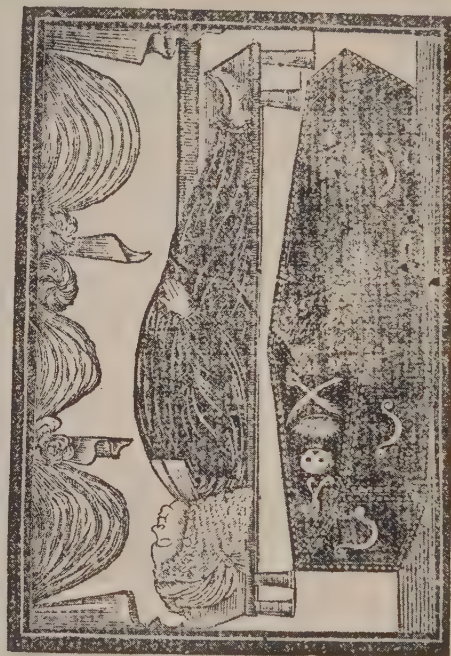
the divine Word. But while his incomparable place in the pulpit is frankly admitted, it is often said that he was a preacher and no more; that he made no lasting impression; and that when the echoes of the matchless voice died away, little or nothing remained. Let us see.

Contrast the Britain of 1736, when Whitefield began to preach, with what it later became. Vital religion, in pulpit and pew, almost dead; a spiritual darkness that could be felt resting on Churchmen and Dissenters alike; form and ceremony thrust to the fore while the deeper truths of the Kingdom were forgotten; a nation famishing for the Bread of Life and ignorant of the remedy. And now mark the change! The old order passes. Pulpits, thousands of them, filled with men of zeal, who know whereof they speak, and whose every message bears the divine seal, "Thus saith the Lord!" Churches crowded; multitudes born again; the masses of the poor, so long neglected, having the gospel preached to them; a new joy, a new hope, a new faith, a new life.

In all this Whitefield had a part. His relative place is a small matter; it never concerned him nor does it us. Certain it is that he was an apostle of the Lord. He was the first to revive the old practice of open-air preaching. Up and down England he went, and everywhere miracles of grace were wrought. At a time when Scotland was drifting from her old-time belief in the deity of Jesus, he

Mr. Whitefield,

dress'd as he was laid out & buried.



This FIGURE represents

WHITEFIELD TRIUMPHANT

helped to bring her back to the primitive faith. His ministry in Wales was monumental; he did much to save the Principality for Christ.

Even more remarkable perhaps was his work in America. Through him the Great Awakening spread far and wide. Edwards spoke to a group in New England, and the Tennents to a circle around Philadelphia; but Whitefield, like a torch in flame, swept from Georgia to Maine. His voice never faltered, and so insistent was his message that finally men's very souls caught the clarion imperative, "Ye *MUST* be born again!" No one ever moved the religious life of America as did he. Wesley's influence was immense, but he spoke through others; Whitefield's was the personal touch. When passing through Philadelphia for the last time, in the spring of 1770, he met Boardman and Pilmoor, Wesley's missionaries, recently arrived, and he gave them his blessing. They came at the strategic moment. As his work closed, theirs began; he had prepared the way. Methodism would never have been received as it was, nor have enjoyed the wonderful growth of those early years, had it not been for Whitefield in making ready the soil.

A volume might be written on the spiritual trophies whom Whitefield won for the Master. Thousands were converted under his preaching, while scores, if not hundreds, entered the ministry. Think of the sources created, whence streams of influence flowed out in every direction! To cite a

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single instance. Two days before his death Whitefield preached in Portsmouth. In the crowd was a godless young fellow by the name of Benjamin Randall. He was sobered but not converted. The following Sunday noon a messenger galloped into town, crying, "Whitefield is dead!" Randall heard him, and long afterward wrote, "A voice sounded through my soul, more loud and startling than ever thunder pealed upon my ears, '*Whitefield is dead!*' Whitefield is now in heaven, but I am on the road to hell. O that I could hear his voice again!" The young man gave himself wholly to Christ, entered the ministry, and became the founder of the Free Will Baptists.

At a time when philanthropies were few, and most men were indifferent to their brothers' needs, Whitefield went everywhere, pouring out his eloquent appeals for the distressed, especially for orphaned children. In both England and America he started a new tide of benevolence. He appeared to be the friend of slavery, this most tender-hearted of men. But it is interesting to remember that in 1769, shortly before he left England for the last time, a ten-year-old boy was led to Christ through his ministry, and that in after years this same lad became the world-leader in destroying slavery—William Wilberforce.

His activity on behalf of Christian education never ceased. We have only to remember his warm interest in Harvard and Yale, his place in the

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early history of the University of Pennsylvania, and the interesting fact that both Princeton and Dartmouth were founded by his friends and followers.

A preacher? Yes, and much more. For his words were transmuted into works whose influence will abide to the end of time.

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